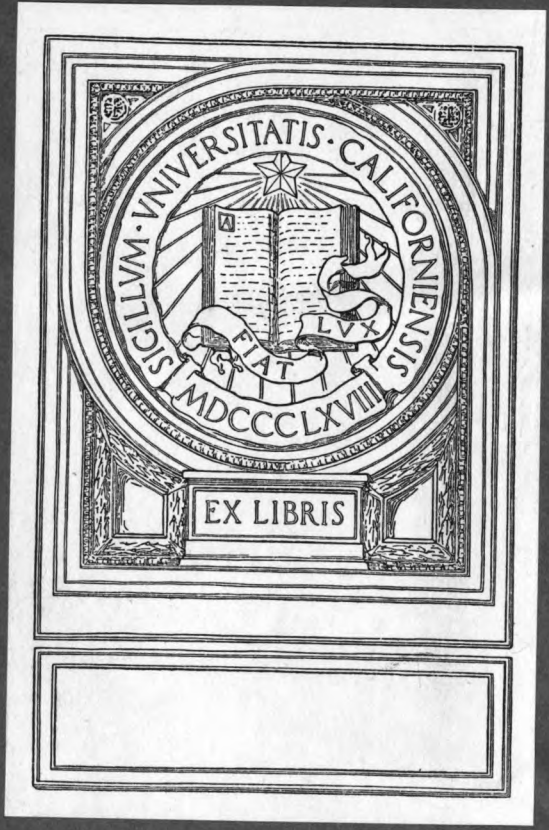
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Bible
Old Testament

JEREMIAH,

AND HIS LAMENTATIONS;

WITH NOTES,

CRITICAL, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL,

DESIGNED FOR BOTH PASTORS AND PEOPLE.

BY

REV. HENRY COWLES, D. D.

"Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I except some man should guide me?"—ACTS VIII: 30, 31.

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PREFACE.

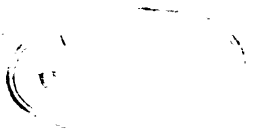
THE present volume on Jeremiah and his Lamentations concludes the series on the Old Testament prophets. I have appended a special dissertation on the system of opinions on prophecy currently known as *the Premillennial Advent of Christ*, or, more briefly, *Premillennarianism*. The merely speculative points of this system I have passed over briefly, but those points which bear with great practical force upon the nature and design of the present gospel age, being thoroughly vital both to Christian faith and to Christian work, I have labored to discuss fundamentally.——This Dissertation and these Notes entire on the Old Testament prophecies are now committed to the Christian public in the prayerful hope that they may serve to obviate some misconceptions, to remove some obscurities, to solve some difficulties, to disclose some new beauties, to illustrate for present use some great principles of God's government in time over nations and men, but more especially to bring out the great points of prophetic revelation with a richer practical force—all being made conducive, through the divine blessing, to a more intelligent faith and to more vigorous and effective labor toward the grand results ere long to be realized in the universal diffusion of the gospel and in the triumphs of its truth and love in all the earth.

Notes on the writings of Solomon are now in course of preparation, and with the divine favor will constitute the next volume.

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JEREMIAH.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

One of the learned and very estimable Jews of our age and country said to me: "I never liked Jeremiah. The other prophets have noble qualities of character or of style, or both, that interest me. My mother never tired of extolling Isaiah, so that I grew up with an unbounded admiration for that great man; but she never fancied Jeremiah, and had no good word to say for him. As I came to read Jeremiah for myself, I thought he lacked strength of mind and stamina of character. In short, I don't think much of him."

This was said very frankly, and probably expresses a feeling which lies, latent or otherwise, in many minds. And yet I am constrained to regard it as a very superficial view of Jeremiah. It judges him by a radically false standard. It does not do him the justice of estimating his character in view of his times, his trials, and his work. Nor does it duly appreciate the intrinsic worth of sanctified sensibilities—the worth of a deep, pure, overflowing *heart*. Hence I protested to my Jewish friend against the injustice of his criticisms upon the weeping prophet. I gladly improve this opportunity of renewing and vindicating my protest against like injustice, in whatsoever quarter it may exist, and however latent it may be.

It may be fitly suggested whether the spirit of our age and people be not adverse to a proper appreciation of such a man as Jeremiah. Our age gives due honor (perhaps more than is due)

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to lofty genius, great intellect, indomitable and dashing energy; but it gives its homage sparingly to the gentle and exquisite sensibilities of the heart. It fails to appreciate a life of meek and patient endurance, and makes small account of that steadfastness of purpose under obloquy and scorn which holds a man to his mission of suffering, under the will of God, and makes him a life-long martyr to his convictions and to his conscience.——In theory, all would readily admit that our divine Lord, as manifested in his human relationships, was a model of superlative excellence; and yet it is not altogether the habit of our times to judge of men in the light of this admitted model. It is not the way of the world to come instinctively to this standard, and to test men by comparing their spirit, temper, principles, and life, with those of the man Jesus. And yet if our theory be right, how manifestly this ought to be our one supreme, decisive standard for estimating character and worth.

Let Jeremiah be compared with Jesus. The history of no other prophet bears so close analogy with the history of our Lord. Jeremiah spent his life withstanding the moral degeneracy which, despite of him, ripened for the judgments sent from God by the Chaldeans. Jesus spent his withstanding a like degeneracy, which, despite of him, went on till judgments came from God by the Romans. These two periods of Jewish history are not only analogous; they are unique: there has been no third one. By Jeremiah, God sent his last words of warning and made his last efforts to reclaim and save the nation prior to the great captivity. So the Lord Jesus inaugurated the last great endeavor to regenerate the nation and call the people and their pastors back to God, prior to the final fall of their city before the Romans. Each failed of any large success in his special object. Each found the degeneracy of the nation fearfully great and its moral stamina almost utterly paralyzed. Each met with determined and rancorous opposition. Each found himself without honor in his own country. Persecution drove each from his youthful home—the earlier from Anathoth, the later from Capernaum. Both protested, admonished, entreated; both announced most solemnly the judgments of God on the nation for its sins; both evinced the most touching sympathy and the most tender sensibility; both were *men of tears*, who wept over the moral infatuation they could not cure and could only deplore. We must be struck with the close analogy between

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the one who said, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jer. 9: 1); and this: "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride" (chap. 13: 11); and the other, who "beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" (Luke 19: 41, 42.)——Jeremiah suffered imprisonment and torture, almost to the point of death; his greater Lord met death itself. Jeremiah would gladly have excused himself from the life-long trial and torture incident to his prophetic mission; but when he said, "I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name," then "the word of the Lord was in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones," and he could not suppress it (20: 9). This blending of struggle and submission was yet more striking in our great Redeemer: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26: 42).—— This brief and imperfect sketch of the analogous points in the lives of the weeping prophet and of the weeping Son of Man may at least serve to raise and keep before our minds the inquiry, how far the great features of the Savior's character and work were developed also in the life and spirit of the prophet of Anathoth. If Jeremiah has excellencies, they belong to that class which preëminently distinguish and adorn the character of Jesus as seen on its human side. It is in this view of him that his writings and life especially commend themselves to our earnest and careful attention.

Let us begin with a comprehensive view of the political and moral state of the Jews when Jeremiah entered upon his prophetic mission.——From Solomon to the captivity, the moral course of the nation was in general downward. The forms of idolatry became constantly more gross, more sensual, more cruel; the spirit of it more pervading, and of course more fearfully pernicious on the popular mind. Under the corrupting influence of idolatry, the general tone of morals and of piety declined apace. The people became more licentious, untruthful, and oppressive. The whole decalogue went down, and not a sin condemned in it was left out in the inventory of the nation's growing and abounding iniquities as made up by the prophets of those times.——The reigns of several pious kings interposed for a time more or less resistance to

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this spreading and deepening apostasy. With them the Lord associated his faithful prophets to help forward the work of reformation—the latter ministering to its inner life and power, while the former wielded their civil authority to suppress the outward manifestations of this national depravity. Yet despite of these combined reformatory efforts, the general course was downward, and the final result was such guilt and depravity as "the Lord could not pardon," but must punish with fearful desolations and a seventy years' captivity.

Omitting the less important reigns of Asa and Jehoshaphat, in which were found some good things toward the God of their fathers, the two great efforts at reform were made by Hezekiah and Josiah. Hezekiah's reign of twenty-nine years made a noble stand against the nation's idolatry and abounding wickedness. Side by side with him wrought Isaiah and Micah. Amos had scarcely closed his mission. Hosea came fully down into those times, and in the sixth year of Hezekiah saw the final overthrow of the ten tribes before the Assyrian arms. Nahum's testimony to the fall of this same Assyrian power came in to augment the moral forces which contributed toward this great reform. It was a grand movement, and most sublimely did the Almighty aid its solemn impression by the signal overthrow, in one awful night, of those Assyrian hosts who had borne away the incorrigible idolaters of the other kingdom to their relentless captivity. Such an array of agencies for a great reform are rarely combined together. It was God's own movement, made with kind and earnest purpose. In the main, all seemed hopeful down to the time of Hezekiah's death. ——Manasseh's long and wicked reign of fifty-five years followed, bursting open anew the flood-gates of depravity and deluging the land worse than ever with the most cruel and bloody forms of idolatry. It was he who "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood which the Lord would not pardon" (2 Kings 24: 4), and "made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem do worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel (2 Chron. 33: 9). His son Amon, in a short but wicked reign of two years, only deepened the broad streams of moral corruption.—— Then the divine mercy raised up one more good king in the person of Josiah, for yet another great effort to reclaim and save the otherwise inevitably ruined nation. He came to the throne at the very early age of eight years. The historian records that "in the

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eighth year of his reign, while yet young," (sixteen years old), "he began to seek after the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year of his reign he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem" of their idols. It was just at this point, *i. e.*, in the thirteenth year of Josiah, that Jeremiah was called out from among the priests of Anathoth to his prophetic work. This Anathoth was a city of the priests, some three miles N. N. E. from Jerusalem, and hence almost within its suburbs, and quite under the influence of its great events. His precise age at this time is not given, but he was manifestly young. When first called, he shrunk from the responsibility, saying, "Behold, Lord, I can not speak, for I am a child." He was a modest youth, and as some suppose, perhaps twenty years of age. As king Josiah was now twenty-one, it is pleasant to think of them as nearly of the same age, with one great and common enterprise before them—to stem and turn back, if possible, the deep and broad currents of national idolatry and sin, to bring the people to repentance, and so to save them from near impending ruin.

It helps us to judge of a man's early training, and indeed of himself, to know his friends and near relatives. A few words therefore will be in place here about the friends of Jeremiah.——*Ahikam*, son of Shaphan, one of his fast and powerful friends (26: 24), who saved him from falling into the hands of the furious populace to meet a martyr's death in the very beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, is prominent in the history as one of the trusted friends and officers of king Josiah (2 Chron. 34: 20, and 2 Kings 22: 12). Under him, Ahikam was active in the great reform then in progress.——The uncle of Jeremiah (32: 7), *Shallum*, bears the same name with the husband of Huldah, the prophetess (2 Chron. 34: 22), and very probably may have been the same person. If so, Jeremiah was the nephew of that distinguished woman whom the king consulted in respect to the book of the law and his duty as king, and through whom especially he received the word of the Lord. This fact indicates the religious influences under which his character was formed and the foundations laid for his prophetic life.——Among the prophet's staunchest friends, down to the latest recorded scenes of his life, were the family of Neriah, especially his two sons—Baruch, who was his amanuensis, and Seraiah, by whom he sent a written message to his captive brethren in Babylon (51: 59–64). This Neriah was the son of Maaseiah,

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who appears (2 Chron. 34: 8) as the governor of Jerusalem, helping forward the great reformation under the reign of Josiah. So that Jeremiah was closely connected not only with the best religious characters of his time, but with pious families that stood very prominent in civil life.——Some have supposed that Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, was the identical Hilkiah who appears as high priest under Josiah, and who was especially prominent in the matter of bringing forth the book of the law, and in setting forward the great national reform in Josiah's reign (2 Chron. 34: 9, 14, 15, 18, etc). But this is doubtful. If it were so, Jerusalem rather than Anathoth should have been the birthplace and home of the prophet, and we might look for more evidence of the fact than mere identity of name. Enough, however, is known of his family and friends to assure us that he was taught and trained early in the fear of the Lord, and was intimately conversant with all the great public religious movements of the reign of Josiah. The Lord had a great work for him to do, and therefore fixed his eye and his hand upon him from his very birth, shaping all the influences that were to develop his mind, form his opinions, and mold his character (1: 5).——The life of Jeremiah as prophet, and that of Josiah as king, ran parallel eighteen years, when Josiah fell at Megiddo in battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. We may well suppose that this was the first great sorrow of the prophet's life. He mourned for his fallen king as one mourneth for a dear and honored personal friend and for a great public benefactor. (See 2 Chron. 35: 25.) How much he knew beforehand of the graceless sons of this good king who would be candidates for the vacant throne, does not appear. He had abundant and sad occasion to know them in future years. While Josiah lived, Jeremiah does not appear at all in the history as given in the books of Kings and Chronicles, nor does his own book of prophecies show him to have been prominent during Josiah's life. Only a small portion of his recorded prophecies bear date in the reign of Josiah, viz., chap. 1, and another message beginning chap. 3: 6, and ending perhaps with the sixth chapter. There can be no doubt, however, that he sympathized deeply with this great reformation which commenced vigorously just one year before his call as a prophet, and which seems to have culminated in a very extraordinary passover five years later (2 Chron. 35: 1–19). It was every thing in this reformation to press the conscience of the

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people with the great and solid truths of religion, and to urge them to thorough self-searching and to radical repentance of all sins of the heart as well as of the life. In this line of effort, we shall see that the messages sent of the Lord by Jeremiah during this period were admirably well adapted for effect, and if duly heeded, would have been most wholesome in their influence.—— After the death of Josiah, our prophet soon began to have new experiences. Previously he had been amply protected in his person and powerfully sustained by the king and his court. Subsequently, there came a new order of things. Four kings fill the period between Josiah's death (B. C. 611) and the fall of the kingdom (B. C. 588). Three of them were sons of Josiah, and one, his grandson; but not one of them bears any other record than that of "doing evil in the sight of the Lord."——Of the four sons of Josiah, the eldest, Johanan, probably died either before or with his father. He does not appear later. His third son, Jehoahaz, was put on the throne first, and by the people, probably because he stood higher in their esteem than Jehoiakim, the second in age. He represented the Chaldean party, following the policy of his father, who fell in an attempt to withstand the Egyptian king then on his march against the Chaldeans. Pharaoh Necho, returning from his northern expedition, deposed the young king of Judah after a reign of but three months, and took him captive to Egypt, where he died. Necho placed his elder brother Jehoiakim on the throne, where he reigned eleven years—one of the meanest and wickedest kings that ever disgraced that throne. A very considerable portion of Jeremiah's prophecies fall within this reign—many of them about his fourth year, when the first serious invasion by the Chaldean forces occurred and the first large deportation of captives. Jehoiakim represented the Egyptian party; was always averse to Jeremiah's exhortations from the Lord to yield to the Chaldean power, and hence stood opposed to the prophet on political as well as religious grounds. Consequently he permitted and even instigated a rancorous persecution against Jeremiah, from which the latter more than once barely escaped with his life. This was the prophet's time of stêrnest trial.——After a reign of eleven years, Jehoiakim was taken in chains to Babylon, and his son Jehoiachin (otherwise called Jeconiah and Coniah) was enthroned in his stead. Three months of wicked misrule and of treachery against the Chaldean

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king ended his reign, and he went a prisoner to Babylon, where he was imprisoned at least thirty-seven years, *i. e.*, till the death of Nebuchadnezzar, and till his son and successor, Evil-merodach, under a new policy, brought him forth from prison and kept him at his own table the rest of his life. (See Jer. 52: 31–34.) This captivity became a somewhat prominent fact in Jewish history. Ezekiel, a fellow captive, makes it an epoch for the date of his prophecies. The Jews seem to have long cherished the hope of his return to their throne. The notices of him in the apocrypha, and through the channel of Jewish tradition, encourage the hope that he became a better man for his life-long affliction. But his record as it appears in Jeremiah, during his three months' reign, is only that of a mean and intensely wicked king.——After him came Zedekiah, yet another and the youngest son of the good Josiah, but doing only evil against the Lord throughout his reign of eleven years. He was weak as well as wicked, and perhaps the less wicked in the sight of God for his weakness. He would have protected Jeremiah more if he had dared, or if he had been manly enough to assert his rights as king. He lived to see the great city seized by the Chaldeans, the nation ruined, and his sons slain. His own eyes were then put out and himself taken in chains to Babylon, to die dishonored there. Jeremiah delivered to him many messages from the Lord; suffered severe persecution during his reign; made earnest but unavailing efforts to withstand the growing corruption of both court and people, and to induce repentance toward God, or at least quiet submission to the inevitable and divinely-ordained supremacy of the Chaldeans, but was baffled in every endeavor.——Such is the disheartening story of Jeremiah's labors and protests during these twenty-three years from the death of Josiah to the utter overthrow of the city and kingdom.——Within his public life fall the dates of Zephaniah and Habakkuk; the former within the reign of Josiah; the latter apparently in the first years of Jehoiakim, shortly before the first invasion from the fierce and terrible Chaldeans. How much personal acquaintance existed between them does not appear, nor is it apparent whether these two prophets shared in the persecution which fell so heavily on Jeremiah. There is no evidence that they did.——The record of Jeremiah notes the case of one Urijah (26: 20–23) who prophesied like Jeremiah against the holy city; was sought for to be put to death; fled for safety to Egypt; was

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pursued vindictively by Jehoiakim, brought back and put to a martyr's death. His case testifies to the rancor of the king and his chieftains against the Lord's faithful prophets, shows what Jeremiah had to face and to fear, and that nothing short of God's special providence preserved his life. It suggests also that no other faithful prophets (such as Zephaniah and Habakkuk) were testifying for the Lord against the sins of the people during the latter years of Jehoiakim and the reign of Zedekiah.——Jeremiah survived the fall of the city and kingdom. His sympathies went with the better part of the people into their exile in Babylon, but he neither accompanied nor followed them in person. Twice he wrote them in a very encouraging and friendly strain, but either through his own convictions of duty, or through the special direction of the Lord, he cast in his lot with the poor remnant who remained a short time in the land, and ultimately, against his earnest protest, went to Egypt to perish there. Nebuchadnezzar befriended him in a most decided manner, and if he had gone to Babylon, his lot would apparently have been as pleasant as that of a captive with his captive brethren well could be, but Jeremiah manifestly sought not his own but the things of his great Master. Hence, in the footsteps of the greater "Man of sorrows," he followed the remnant who had no shepherd and no heart to heed one, and filled out his remaining days among an ungrateful, disobedient, and unappreciative people. Beyond this exile to Egypt and these thankless labors to call back to God the lowest, weakest, and wickedest portion of the Jewish people, we hear of him no more. Did he die in peace, or under the unceasing vengeance of persecution in Egypt, or elsewhere, no record lives to witness. Perhaps, in the spirit of his own admonition to his faithful Baruch, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not," he put his seal on the lips of his friends and suffered them to bear no testimony to his death. He had given his patient, suffering, weeping life for God, and then looked trustfully to him alone for his reward.

The dates of his several prophecies are usually given; yet, in some cases, the indications of time and circumstance are so dim as to occasion considerable diversity of opinion among critics. But the order of their arrangement in the book is very peculiar. To a considerable extent, it is chronological; and yet there are several entire departures from this principle. By what law this order of

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arrangement was determined, it would be quite difficult to say. It is, however, very obvious that Jeremiah's condition and circumstances were altogether unfavorable for the careful and methodical arrangement of his distinct prophecies. It appears that at first, and for some time, his prophecies were merely oral, and not written out. Then (chap. 30: 1–3, and 36: 1–4) the Lord directed him to write them in a book; and Baruch became his amanuensis for this purpose, and wrote down from his lips up to that time all that the Lord wished to preserve. But the first copy passed into the hands of king Jehoiakim, who defiantly cut it up with his penknife, and burnt it in his parlor fire (36: 22, 23). Then, by the Lord's direction, these prophecies were re-written, with the addition of "many like words." This copy seems to have been preserved (36: 32). It is not clear that the order of arrangement in which they have come down to us is specially due to the hand of Jeremiah. Nor is it a matter of special consequence. There is no reason to question their genuineness — no doubt that these are precisely the prophecies of Jeremiah, whose standing as a true and faithful prophet of Jehovah lacks no indorsement from our divine Lord and his apostles, nor from Jewish tradition, nor from the incidental corroboration of profane history. Nothing is lacking which can be deemed important to their most abundant sanction.

Criticisms on his style will be of small account. He did not write to say fine things, or for the sake of displaying a classic style, but to announce momentous truths from a burdened heart, in words as plain and solemnly impressive as he could command. There is nothing in his style specially open to critical objections. The narrative portions are eminently lucid. Where his prophecies become descriptive of either great judgments or great mercies, they exhibit the usual qualities of Hebrew poetry. Ordinarily, there is no great difficulty in gaining a satisfactory view of his meaning.——His book is valuable to us almost exclusively for its *great moral lessons*. These are above rubies. The wisdom of God is in them.——Preëminently they reveal to us God's hand in his providential and moral government over the nations of the earth as such in this world. Here we see delineated the full administration of this government over not Judah alone, but all the prominent nations of Western Asia. It is a rich and most instructive lesson, and strongly commends itself to the serious regard of all

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the nations of the earth to-day and onward through all time.—— It also reveals God in his relations to his Church and people, especially as seen in their states of apostasy or sore backsliding. How he dealt with them; how he felt toward them; how he made the very tears of his prophet witness to his own tenderness of heart; with what severity he denounced their sins; with what patience he bore with their long-continued abuse; with what holy justice he finally scourged them; and with what ineffable tenderness he sought to draw them to himself: all these qualities of his heart and features in his rule over men stand delineated in the clearest light and in the most impressive forms in this book of prophecies.——Then, too, there are portions which are above all price, as revealing God's deep, underlying purpose at length to interpose his mighty arm, retrieve his waning, imperiled cause, and force his way (may we not say?) to victory for Zion and the Savior's kingdom, despite of the immense barriers which a faithless people interpose. In all these respects, this book commends itself to our earnest regard and to our high appreciation for its lucid and sublime revelations of our ever-blessed God. Let our souls be grateful for the writing and preservation of such a book!—— Then, moreover, it is invaluable to us for its developments of human character. We have a mournful interest in these revelations of appalling guilt. We can not forget that these daring, morally-hardened sinners are of our bone and flesh. The qualities they exhibited are only those of our own unlovely nature. Perhaps their life may be a mirror to reflect back on us some of the base things of our own hearts. If not, it may at least suggest to us how much we owe to the grace that has made us differ. Be this as it may, there stands out here, in bold relief, the insidious danger of heart-apostasy, and the necessity of unceasing vigilance and watchfulness against the subtle temptations to backsliding from God. This awful wickedness which so cursed the nation was really that of backsliding—apostasy. They and their fathers had seen better days. Josiah called them back to the living God; many of these same men had gone with him into those solemn acts of consecration and re-consecration to the worship and service of the God of their fathers. O, how did they fall back thereafter by a perpetual backsliding and refuse to return!——Their case, as portrayed here, evinces the certainty and fearfulness of God's retribution for such sin. There is a limit where forbearance

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is no longer a virtue, but "the strange work" of vengeance comes to be the stern demand of inexorable justice. The people of those times reached and passed that limit; so may other sinners; so may some of us!——Again, as elsewhere and ever, so here, there is an inference to be drawn from the certainty and fearfulness of retribution on its small scale in this world, to its equal certainty and far greater fearfulness in the world to come. "If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If, despite of its conflict with the genius of a world of probation, such judgments fall on hardened sinners in this world, what must come in that other world where probation interposes no barrier, and where simple justice takes its course unimpeded, unchanging, and eternal?——On the other hand, there are glorious lights breaking through the rifts of these dark clouds—precious manifestations of the great depths of divine mercy and compassion toward the penitent. Few passages in all the Bible surpass several of this class that occur in this book. Their unction is precious. We shall love to pause before them and take home to our very hearts the witness they bear to the ocean-depth and fullness of the love of God.——Finally, there are some lessons of great interest and value to be found in the life and spirit of this prophet. It is God's way to raise up his own instruments and adapt them for the work he gives them to do. Jeremiah was an illustration of this divine policy. We shall take pleasure, as we pass on, in noticing how his modest, retiring spirit shrunk from the responsibilities of a prophet even before its darker aspects came up to his view—even while yet a nobly-good king, one who was probably a personal friend, sat on the throne, and a most beneficent reform was just being inaugurated. We shall note how he yielded to the pressure of God's hand upon him (20: 7, 9); how step by step he moved on into peril and darkness thickening fearfully in his path; how "he endured as seeing him who is invisible;" how he never so quailed before his enemies as to withhold one of the stern words God gave him to say; how we rarely hear the slightest murmur from his lips; how when human frailty seemed too much for present grace, the Lord kindly gave more grace; how he filled out the very last days of a prophetic life, which overran forty years, with suffering, daring, witnessing, beseeching, and weeping—almost evermore—with apparently fruitless endeavor, and with no consolations known to us save those of a clear conscience and an approving God. Especially let us note

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the great, apparently inexhaustible wealth of his holy sensibilities. His heart never became misanthropic—never had the least touch of the malign element. He never ceased to love with the love of sympathy and pity the wickedest and vilest of those whose sins the Lord sent him to denounce. There is a wonderful record for us in *those tears!* Would to God that all his ministering servants kept their own spirit in a sympathy with Christ's as near, warm, and effective, as did this prophet of Anathoth!——There is something here for the servants of God to study and to learn. The sacred word had been incomplete without this touching exemplar. It would be a blessing to the Church, a blessing to the gospel ministry, and a new gift of power to the kingdom of our Lord, if the spirit of this example might be revived and poured out in a fresh and glorious baptism of tender sensibility upon the people of God and upon their pastors in all the earth.

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JEREMIAH.

CHAPTER I.

THIS chapter is an appropriate introduction to this book of prophecies, giving their date in general terms, the prophet's call to his work, and a comprehensive view of what this work was to be.

1. The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that *were* in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:
2. To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.
3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

The points made here have been sufficiently developed in my general introduction.——The prophet's life and labors really continued somewhat later than the eleventh year and fifth month of Zedekiah. The prophecies and events recorded chap. 40–45 are manifestly subsequent to that. But probably it was not deemed important to be more specific in this brief introduction.——The thirteenth year of Josiah was B. C. 629. From this date till the final destruction of the city (588 B. C.) was forty-one years. Jeremiah's ministry continued on yet further; how long is not known. ——The history of these events, collateral with Jeremiah's life, is sketched briefly in 2 Kings, chap. 22–25, and in 2 Chron., chap. 34–36. It will be very much to the reader's advantage to examine those historic chapters carefully in connection with the prophecies of Jeremiah.

4. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

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"Sanctified," as the word is used here, means *set apart* to a special service, and not simply and strictly cleansed from sin. Indeed, to "*set apart*" is the primary sense of the word. The word "ordained," moreover, must not be taken in its technical, ecclesiastical sense, as when we speak of one as being "ordained to the gospel ministry." The standard meaning of the original word is to *give*, but Hebrew usage currently employs this verb in the sense of *appoint, make*, so that "I *gave* thee to the service and work of a prophet for the nations" means I appointed thee to this service. ——The object of the Lord in saying to Jeremiah, "I had my eye on thee for my prophet to the nations before thou wast born," was to give him the greater assurance of his call, and to impress the more strongly on his mind that God was in earnest and had a work for him to do from which he could not be excused. For the Lord knew very well how the heart of the youthful priest would shrink from such a mission. The reader should not assume that God's foreknowledge was any greater or his antecedent plans any more fixed in the case of Jeremiah than in every other case. It comes not of any specialty in respect to particular individuals, but of God's essential nature, that he knows and plans the course of human life before its existence begins. As this knowing and planning in nowise lessened either the personal freedom of action or the moral responsibility of Jeremiah, so neither can it overrule or in the least disturb the perfectly free agency of any other being—human, angelic, or diabolic.——This is not the place for metaphysical discussions on this subject, or for an attempt to answer the question, How can these things be? Let it suffice here to have briefly stated the palpable, undeniable facts.

6. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I can not speak: for I *am* a child.

7. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah was young and modest, and had a low estimate of his own qualifications for this work. It does not appear, either here or elsewhere, that he wavered on the point of doing the whole known will of God; but rather that his first impression was that of utter insufficiency for this work, and that on this ground only he begged to be excused. But the Lord gave him to understand that he knew his qualifications, and had the grace and help of his own presence to set off against his young servant's conscious insufficiency. Hence he answered, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go *against* all to whom I send thee"—*against* rather than "*to*," as implying their foreseen antagonism to his message. This is the legitimate sense of the original word.——"Whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak." Let the Lord bear the responsibility of its being the

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proper thing to say; you have only the responsibility of saying it precisely as I give it to you.——You need not fear their *faces*—the thing that timid young men are most wont to fear. Think only that the Lord your God is with you, and let his presence be your joy and strength.——The original word, rendered "child," is quite indefinite as to the point of age. It is applied to the babe Moses when three months old (Ex. 2: 6); to the new-born babe Ichabod (1 Sam. 4: 21); and, on the other hand, to four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled before David (1 Sam. 30: 17); and much as in our passage here, Solomon applies it to himself when he came to the kingdom and plead his youth as a reason for asking much wisdom and help from his God: "I am but a *little child;* I know not how to go out or to come in" (1 Kings 3: 7). It is plausibly supposed that Jeremiah was at this time not far from twenty years of age.

9. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

As if to meet very significantly the point of Jeremiah's plea, "I can not speak," the Lord puts forth his hand and touches his mouth, as if he would say, "Trust me for grace adapted to your wants—grace to help in all your need." It had also this further significance, viz., that the young man need not be forethoughtful about words to say or messages to deliver. The Lord was to provide both the things to be said and the words in which to say them. The prophet was simply to deliver the message which the Lord might give him.

10. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

This is a strong yet very palpable case in which the prophet is said to *do* what he merely proclaims the purpose of God to do. In chap. 31: 28, the Lord says of himself, "It shall come to pass that like as I have watched over them to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them to build and to plant." This is the work of God in his providence, and it is his alone.——The same usage which, for brevity's sake, speaks of the prophet himself as doing what he only proclaims the purpose of God to do, appears in Ezek. 43: 3, "According to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city."

11. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

12. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

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To teach the youthful prophet yet further concerning his work, the Lord proceeds to give him two successive visions—the first, of an almond tree, to show that the judgments to be predicted would *come soon;* the second, of a seething pot, to show *from what quarter they would come.* This of an almond tree might indicate its own significance to Jeremiah by the sense of the Hebrew word which means *the waker*, the tree that wakes earliest in spring from the repose of winter. Pliny says of it that it begins to blossom in January and sometimes matures its fruit in March. Hence it becomes an expressive figure for what is to be done soon and with wakeful earnestness.——But the Lord added his own interpretation: "I will hasten my word to perform it." Literally, "I am watching over my word to perform it"—wakeful, and just ready to start the requisite agencies into action. The time was at hand when the Lord would begin to bring judgments on Judah and Jerusalem for their great sins. It was especially the sin of Manasseh, grandfather of Josiah, which God "could not pardon" and for which he doomed the nation to its long captivity. (See 2 Kings 21: 11–16, and 24: 3, 4.) If the people could be brought to thorough repentance under the labors of Josiah and the faithful prophets of the Lord who were coöperating with him, these judgments might be averted; otherwise they must fall on the guilty land very soon.——Such considerations were obviously adapted to inspire the most intense solicitude and earnestness in the heart of the prophet to do his work faithfully and with his might.

13. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof *is* toward the north.

14. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

15. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

As said above, this second vision indicated the quarter from which these judgments should come. This "seething pot" is a pot under which the fire is *blown up.* This is the meaning of the adjective (in Heb.) which describes the state of the pot. We must think of this pot as out of doors, exposed to all winds. Its face was "*from the north*" (so I understand the original words), not toward the north; but more in the sense of the English marginal reading. Its open face was from the north, so that its steam and smoke seemed to come from that quarter. Thus it indicated that the elements in that region were in commotion, and that calamity would soon open itself a way and come rushing forth from that direction. The Lord would rouse up all the families of those

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northern kingdoms, the assemblage of tribes and nations that were grouped together under the rule of the king of Babylon, and they should come and set up each his throne in the gates of Jerusalem. This language fitly describes the constitution of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom—a group of those powerful states which he had subjected to his sway. (See Dan. 3: 29, and 4: 1, 22).

It is noticeable that though Chaldea and Babylon lay east of Judah, yet their armies are said—not here alone, but usually elsewhere—to come *from the north*. The reason of this is that they entered Palestine from the north, going high up the valley of the Euphrates in a north-western direction, and then coming into the land by way of Riblah and Hamath, on the north. This circuit was made to avoid the great Arabian desert which lay directly between Palestine and Chaldea.

16. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.

The meaning is, "For all their wickedness I will announce my impending judgments upon those who have forsaken me," etc., referring to the Jews and pointing out briefly their great sins of idol worship, for which mainly these exterminating judgments were sent. This was preëminently the mission of Jeremiah. It was proper that here, in the outset of his work, the Lord should show him what it was to be, and prepare his mind to expect resistance and persecution.

17. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

18. For behold, I have made thee this day a defensed city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

19. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Forewarning the prophet of an arduous and perilous work, the Lord admonished him to gird himself for the conflict and put his trust in the Lord his God. Correspondingly the Lord promises to make him strong to bear and to withstand opposition, even as a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall, are firm against whatever may assail or smite them.——To "gird up the loins" is the oriental phrase for putting one's self in readiness for active and arduous service. The loose flowing robes of the oriental dress must be girded round the loins, so as not to interfere with the free action of the limbs and of the whole body.——In the

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last clause of v. 17, the full force of the original would be better expressed by rendering, "Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I dismay thee before them." Suffer no fear of them to touch your heart, lest I make you afraid with real cause to fear. The verb is the same in each clause.——We now have before us the prophet's call to his prophetic work. The manner in which the Lord made his will known was obviously such as to leave no sort of doubt on the prophet's mind of the reality of his call. Then it remained for him to make up his mind whether or not to obey it. On this point the flesh was weak; but we love to note that the spirit was willing. The prophet entered on his work with no gainsaying. At one or more subsequent points, the strain caused by trial and suffering became most severe. We shall see that he seemed for the moment to falter, yet, on the whole, his own Lord sustained him according to the promise here given.——This call at once opened a new life before this young man. It promised nothing on the score of comfort, competence, ease, or honor (of the sort that comes from men). On the contrary, the Lord plainly assumed that his life-work would be bitter, toilsome, thankless, repulsive—resisted at all points by those to whom he was sent with the word of the Lord; and the only consideration presented to offset so much hardship and suffering was, "I am with thee." Go at my bidding, and bide my time for thy reward.——There is great wealth of precious instruction and inspiration in the example which such a case presents. Let all the servants of the living God take note of it. Does it profit a man to serve the Lord on such terms? Is it truly a wise policy to give up the whole of one's life upon such a call?—to forego all that earth can give for what the Lord of heaven can give and will? How does Jeremiah think of his choice to day? Has any really faithful servant of the Lord—once through and home to his rest—ever repented of his fidelity, as if he had overdone his work, and overpaid for the consideration he gets in return?——And yet, this is not the most pertinent form of present test. Let us rather ask, Has any really faithful servant of the Lord ever failed of being amply rewarded all along on his way heavenward by the bliss of Jehovah's presence, by the peace of a good conscience, by the reacting satisfaction that comes home to the soul from self-sacrificing benevolence? Does not the Lord pay his servants for the most part *as they do their work*, so that they have abundant occasion to be satisfied and to glory in their tribulations and in their infirmities, since thereby all the more shall the presence of Christ be with them and his grace abound in their behalf?

There is another yet more pertinent form of putting this great practical question. Did not Jeremiah hold his heart to the one simple yet sublime purpose, to obey the manifest will of God whether he could see any reward coming from it or not? Did he not learn to trust God to do all things wisely and lovingly, however dark the visible indications might be?——The Lord is wont to put his children to the test on this point. He put Jeremiah to this test;

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and one of the great moral lessons of his recorded life comes to us in the generally steadfast purpose of his spirit, despite of the weakness and occasional waverings of his flesh in this stern moral trial.

CHAPTER II.

This chapter, and the first five verses of the third, seem to constitute one message. Unlike most of Jeremiah's special messages, this stands without date. The question of its date involves difficulties. In favor of dating it among the very earliest of his prophecies, say in the thirteenth year of Josiah (1: 2, and 25: 3), are its location first in order in the book; the implied apostasy of the people from God, which is such as the very long and very wicked reign of Manasseh must have induced; and the adaptation of such a message from the Lord's prophet to promote the great reformation which the good Josiah commenced in earnest but one year previously. It should be remembered that Josiah, "in his twelfth year, began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from their idol groves and images" (2 Chron. 34: 3). These points of evidence, internal and external, favor this early date.——In favor of a much later date—as some suppose in the reign of Jehoiakim—are the allusions (2: 16, 18, 24) to their seeking political help from Egypt; whereas Josiah, at least in the latter years of his reign, was in alliance, not with Egypt, but with the empire on the Euphrates, for he met his death in his attempt to prevent the king of Egypt from passing through his country to fight Charchemish. To this it may be replied, however, that Josiah's death was nineteen years after Jeremiah began to prophesy, and that the chapter before us implies that the national policy had vacillated between Egypt and Assyria, sometimes seeking alliance with one and then with the other. The prophet rebukes the people for trusting at all in these foreign alliances, assuring them that the result could be only shame and ruin.—I incline to the earlier date.——The chapter exposes and rebukes the great sins of an apostate people.

1. Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
2. Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was* not sown.
3. Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD, *and* the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

The Lord tacitly compares his own covenant relation to the

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Jews with that most tender and precious of all human relations, the marriage state. Then, with a happy allusion to the warmth of interest and affection common to the recently betrothed or wedded, he says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal," *i. e.*, the love shown by the people when they followed his leadings through that ancient wilderness of Sinai. There the people mostly walked by faith, and followed the Lord and his servant Moses. To the great proposition made by the Lord to the whole people, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people," they "all answered together, and said, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do'" (Exod. 19: 5–8). Forty years they followed the standard of the Lord their God—that pillar which was cloud to them by day and fire by night, but, day or night, the symbol of Jehovah's presence and leadership. With some murmurings, indeed, and some sad and shameful apostasies into idolatry, especially among the older class of people, yet, in the main, and especially as to those not past twenty years of age when they came forth from Egypt, they seem to have walked humbly before the Lord their God. The generation that went under Joshua into Canaan, whose characters were formed not in Egypt, under its pupilage of oppression and idolatry, but around Mount Sinai, and under the wing of that pillar of cloud or fire, and overshadowed by the sanctuary where Jehovah dwelt, were the best generation known in Hebrew history. Then truly "Israel was holiness to the Lord." As the first ripe fruits were sacred to God, and not by any means to be taken for common use, and as these fruits are often sought after with fresh and keen appetite, and are accounted specially rich, so the Lord could speak of the new and fresh religious life of this people as the "first-fruits of their income" to him—his first reward for his labor and love in his moral culture of this nation.——This is an exquisitely touching view of the interest which the Lord felt in those early fruits of faith and love among his recently consecrated people. Does it not show how intensely the Lord loves his Zion, and how surely he will appreciate at its full value all the love and obedience his people ever render him?——"All that devour him shall offend," shall *be held as offenders.* God will take them in hand as guilty and worthy of punishment. He watches over his obedient, trusting people so carefully, and with such love, that no adversary who harms them can hope to escape due punishment. The Psalmist sung (105: 14), "He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sake."——All unlike this state of love on their part, and protection on his, was the case when they were in revolt from him. Then he suffered every enemy to come in and scourge them.——Remarkably, those enemies seem to understand why they prevailed so easily against a people who yet were in covenant with a God of so much power. Thus, as said by Jeremiah (50: 7), when the Lord's people were wandering afar on distant mountains, "All that found them de-

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voured them," and their adversaries said, "We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord."——These great truths—the nation protected while obedient, and, when disobedient, unprotected and scourged, with impunity to their chastisers—fill out the whole history of the covenant people.——We may fitly note how beautifully and winningly this reference to the early love existing between the Lord and his covenant people stands at the head of the expostulations and rebukes that so largely fill this book of Jeremiah. The Lord would have them understand how gladly he would welcome the nation back to the early warmth of their love, and no less to the eternal warmth of his!

4. Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.

5. Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

6. Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

The fathers of the generation then living had begun this fearful apostasy from their God into idolatry, and now God appeals to their children to say if it were for any fault of his, and if any, for what? They, not God, had broken covenant. They should not have done it unless there was something wrong on the side of their God. Could they charge any wrong upon him? What perverse thing had he ever done to justify them in turning aside at all from the path of humble, honest obedience? What had their God done that they should turn away from him to go after mere wind and emptiness, and become so utterly foolish?——This last phrase—"walking after vanity and becoming vain"—occurs somewhat frequently. It most fitly describes the supreme folly and guilt of turning from the living God to dead idols, mere nothings, unsubstantial as a puff of air. This is the thought in the verb here used. (See 2 Kings 17: 15.)——Yet another element in their guilt was that they had forgotten the glorious Savior of their nation, who had made them all they ever were as a nation; who found them under the cruel yoke of Egypt; who broke that yoke and burst those bonds, and with a high hand brought them forth to freedom and national life; who led them safely, guided them visibly, fed them miraculously, all through that dreary, terrible wilderness, never traversed before or since by such a host. But the people did not say, Where is that great God who has done all this for our nation? Yet those were things they should never have forgotten. God's own hand had wrought the very warp and

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woof of their national history, so that they could not forget and forsake him without most palpable ingratitude and extreme guilt. ——In such ways does God bind himself to us all by a life-long record of mercies. Not a man of us can turn away from him and give our heart to any lower thing, without equal or greater guilt.

7. And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

The same course of thought continues—the manner of address changing from the third person to the second—passing from speaking of the fathers to speaking directly *to* the children then living, and then addressed by the prophet in the name of the Lord.—— "I brought you"—*you* as a nation—from that desolate wilderness into Carmel, a land fair and fertile. Ye came into *my* land, and then defiled it and made it an abomination. So God thinks and speaks of their idolatry. It had made his own land to him a loathsome, reeking abomination!

8. The priests said not, Where *is* the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after *things that* do not profit.

It was the business and duty of the priests to lead the people on to inquire after God. They did no such thing, but only the opposite. Those who "handled the law"—who had it in their hands, and of course bore the responsibility of teaching its truth to the people, had really ignored God and his claims altogether. The pastors who should have fed the flock and kept them near to God, proved treacherous and false; the prophets who should have prophesied faithfully for God, went over to Baal, to prophesy by him and for him, and to do his work and bidding; they walked after what could be only a curse. What "does not profit" must be taken in the strong sense of its opposite, that which is really ruinous. Idol-worship can not be a mere negation, merely void of profit, fruitless. It must be positively destructive, and by a common figure of speech the negation of profit has here this sense.

9. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

The original word here used, "plead," means in some cases to contend by means of judgments, and in other cases to debate with arguments. The subsequent contest shows that the latter is the sense here. It is a remarkably strong and clear showing in the light of reason, that his people were utterly foolish and fearfully *guilty*.

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10. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

11. Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit.

This is the first point in his plea. No other nation has changed its gods. Go to the farthest west, and then through the distant east; inquire diligently; go to the utmost point of your geography and of your history and find, if you can, one case of a heathen nation which has abandoned its own ancient historic gods for new ones. And yet their gods were really no gods at all. But my people have changed a God in whom they might reasonably glory, for supposed gods that are not only worthless, but utterly ruinous! Is not this horrible?——This fixedness in national ideas respecting their own idol gods is a wonderful fact of human history. The nations of southern and south-eastern Asia have adhered, some to Buddha and some to Brahma, for thirty centuries with no important change. Yet they might well afford to change, since leaving what is worth nothing must be in any case hopeful. ——God can not but regard it as basely insulting to himself that his professed people should be the only nation known in all human history that had changed their gods; and yet they were the only nation whose God had any real existence, or the least worth, the only God that saves, while other gods only ruin their worshipers! ——"Chittim" is primarily a town on the island of Cyprus; then came to be used often for the whole island; and finally, for all those regions which lie beyond the great sea on the west and north-west, in south-eastern Europe.——Kedar was a son of Ishmael, then the head of an Arab tribe; and here represents the vast regions of the east.

12. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

13. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The thing so revolting and so horrible in the eye of reason is that God's people forsake him and go after false, idol gods instead. For, God is a fountain of blessings, never failing, ever pure, flowing abundantly and freely, meeting every want most perfectly, and bearing a glorious wealth of good to his people; yet they spurn this fountain and set themselves to hew out worthless cisterns that can not hold water, whose waters are soon foul, and their supply sure to fail in the day of real need.——To get the full force of this figure we may think of an oriental, half-torrid climate on a wild, parched Arabian desert, where water is the first necessity of

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human existence—where half the year is rainless, and the miserable sojourners are fain to betake themselves to building cisterns as a last resort for sustaining life. Under such circumstances, no man, not positively insane, could be so senseless and foolish as to forsake a fresh, perennial fountain to toil over a frail, uncertain cistern. It is only in religion that men, otherwise intelligent and sensible, make themselves fools!——O, might they only consider that it is infinitely better to come to God, the great Fountain of all good, and live in him, than to repel his love and care, and perpetrate the folly of toiling at one's own cistern, in the vain hope of living independently of God! Alas, that men in all ages are so slow to learn that God is a fountain of unmeasured blessedness to all who put their trust in him! Alas, that they *will* not see that their own cisterns are miserably poor at best, and full certain to fail them all too soon!——This apostrophe to the heavens (v. 12), it might be admissible by poetic license to take as addressed to the material and really unconscious inanimate heavenly worlds. But it is better to take it as spoken to the intelligent beings of those worlds. They can see the inexpressible folly of the sin here portrayed. Jehovah calls on them to look at this specimen of sheer madness in beings created rational by their Maker, but made mad by their own lusts. Let them look at it, and be amazed and horrified at the sight!——The two last verbs are very expressive. The one rendered "be horribly afraid," means to shudder as one alarmed; to have the hair stand erect as when one is smitten with amazement and affright.——The last one, which means primarily to be dry, and then to be desolate, may be used for that overpowering sensation which the silence, the solitude, and the dismal dreariness of the desert may produce. Taken together, these strongest terms in the language show how intensely amazed all the holy in heaven are at the monstrous folly of human sinning. That when men *might* have the infinite God for their Friend, they choose to have him their enemy; that when they *might* have him their exhaustless portion of unmeasured and eternal good, they spurn him away, and set themselves to the fruitless task of making some ruinous substitute; this is beyond measure amazing! Verily, sin is a mockery of human reason! It defies all the counsels of prudence and good sense, and glories only in its own shame and madness!

14. *Is* Israel a servant? *is* he a home-born *slave?* why is he spoiled?

Looking at Israel as ruined, the Lord here inquires for the cause. Was he not a servant, *i. e.*, one of the domestics, who, in a kind oriental household, was sure to be well provided for? Was he not "one born in the house?" The word "slave" is quite gratuitous here. Its Italics, in the English translation, indicate the absence of any Hebrew word that could be translated *slave*. "One born in the house" is precisely what the Hebrew is, and *all* that it is. Those domestics born in the house were very far from being *slaves*, in the

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American and modern sense of the term.——Israel being so born and so related to the household, how comes it that he is laid waste and subjected to utter spoil?

15. The young lions roared upon him, *and* yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

"The young lions" stand here for those foreign enemies—the Chaldeans especially—who came down roaring upon the defenseless cities and homes of Judah and laid them desolate.

16. Also the children of Noph and Tahaphanes have broken the crown of thy head.

With the orientals, to pluck out the hair of the head and beard was the highest insult, and indicated the hopeless subjection of the sufferer. This sentiment underlies the verse before us. I render it, "The children of Noph and Tahaphanes have *pastured down* the crown of thy head."——Our translators who render the verb, "broken," seem to have derived it from a root which means to break, instead of another which means to feed down, as in a pasture. The form of the verb here requires the latter root, and the sense is better. For to rob the head of its hair better expresses what Egypt did to Israel than to break in one's skull. The former indicates dishonor and disgrace, and involves disappointed hope; while the latter simply is and denotes utter destruction. The latter came by the Chaldeans; the former from the Egyptians.——As to the significance of making one bald, compare 2 Kings 2: 23, where the smart boys of Elijah's time taunted Elisha, saying, "Go up too, thou bald-head!" The effect on Elisha's mind shows that he felt it to be an outrage. Or compare Jer. 48: 27, where the sorrow and shame of Moab are expressed thus: "Every head shall be bald and every beard clipped."——Noph and Tahaphanes, otherwise called Memphis and Daphne, distinguished cities of Egypt, are put here for Egypt herself. Jehoiakim made a league with Egypt (2 Kings 23: 34, 35), and manifestly put his trust in Egypt and not in God for protection. (See, onward, vs. 18, 36.) But he was subjected to severe and shameful taxation. As said in 2 Kings (above referred to), "He gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land," etc. Such a process of shaving taxation and consequent disgrace, our passage forcibly describes.

17. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

This disgrace and calamity they had brought on themselves by forsaking their own God when he was leading them in the right

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way. The noun rendered "way" has the Hebrew article, making it somewhat emphatic, *the* way they should have taken; the only way they should have thought of.

18. And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

The sense is, What hast thou to do with the way to Egypt? What business hast thou there? Why should thou have the least dependence on Egypt?——Sihor, which means the black, turbid river, is the Nile—as the word at the end of the verse, translated "the river," is the Euphrates—that being *the* river, par excellence, the largest river known to the people of Western Asia.——The tacit reference to v. 13, God the fountain of living waters, should not be overlooked here. Waters are here, as there, the symbol of good, in this case the good of protection against national enemies.

19. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

It was scarcely necessary that God should himself reprove them. Their own sins reproved and rebuked them so manifestly that they had only to look at the case to see that their forsaking God was all wrong, bitterly and ruinously so, even against themselves.

20. For of old time I have broken thy yoke, *and* burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

The main difficulty in this verse is to determine the precise reading of the original. The connection of thought with the previous verse is best made by reading thus (v. 19): "Thy wickedness is so open, daring, and defiant, that it must itself reprove and rebuke thee," etc. Then (v. 20), "For" (still continuing and expanding the same thought), "*for* thou hast long since broken the yoke and burst the bands that held thee in covenant with thy God, and thou hast said, I will not serve" (not, "I will not transgress"), "for on every high hill and under every green tree, thou hast taken the attitude of a harlot." These two Hebrew verbs meaning to *serve* and to *transgress*, differ only in their last radical letter, and one of these letters might be mistaken for the other.——The Hebrew text seems to me to favor, not to say demand, the reading "serve," as in the English margin, rather than "transgress," as in the English text.——But, on the other hand, our Hebrew text, in case of the first two verbs, rendered

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"broken" and "burst," gives us the first person, "I have broken," rather than the second, "Thou hast broken." If we read, "I have broken," the passage refers to their servitude in Egypt, or often in the days of the judges, from which God had delivered them. A very slight change in a vowel brings the first person into a form in which the second person occasionally appears in the later Hebrew, and this is the easiest solution of the difficulty here. Then the thought flows easily: "Long since thou didst break thy yoke and burst thy bands, and didst even declare, 'I will not serve'" (God), "for every-where thou didst expose thyself as a harlot."

21. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

22. For though thou wash thee with niter, and take thee much soap, *yet* thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

The word rendered "degenerate plant" is used abundantly for *departing* from God and his law, and therefore has a manifest significance in this figure of speech which can not easily be preserved in any translation. It is somewhat thus: "How art thou changed, so as to become as to me apostate, like the heathen type of vines?" This blending of the figurative and the literal gives the sense clearly, though it may violate our rules of rhetoric.——The words rendered "niter" and "soap" represent, respectively, the mineral and the vegetable alkalies used by the ancients in cleansing.——The word rendered "marked" means engraved or written *indelibly*. The Lord says, therefore, that their sin can not be washed out by any effort of theirs. The corruption had gone too deep.——These verses show that the nation began its national life well, mainly right before God. But they had become utterly degenerate and incurably corrupt.

23. How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

24. A wild ass used to the wilderness, *that* snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

Guilty as Judah was, she was strangely self-justifying. Hence this expostulation from the Lord, saying, How canst thou pretend that thou art not wholly defiled with idolatry? Look at thy doings in *the* valley, *i. e.*, the valley of the son of Hinnom, where they performed the horrid rites of Moloch, burning children to death in his honor and worship! That this valley of Hinnom, lying on the south

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of Jerusalem, is referred to here by "*the* valley," is made certain by the frequent reference to this valley in Jeremiah's prophecies, as a place notorious for the worship of Baal and Moloch. (See 7: 31, 32, and 19: 2, 6, 11–13, and 32: 35.)——Then recurring to the figure so frequent in the prophets by which idolatry is thought of as adultery and whoredom, the people are declared to be not merely *like* the young she-camel in her heat, and the wild ass in her season, but they are accosted as being actually such a camel and wild ass, equally void of native or acquired modesty, and equally furious in the heat of their passion for idols.——"Traversing her ways" refers to her ranging the desert, crossing her former paths, and describing a net-work in her courses, through her half-frantic impulses of animal passion. Those that seek her will have no trouble to find her.——This setting forth of the senseless and reckless intoxication of the people in idol-worship is exceedingly caustic, and might well put them to shame. They had become *bestial*, and were no longer rational in the indulgence of their passion for idols.

25. Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

Probably the same figure—idolatrous Judah, a young she-camel in her heat—is kept up through the first half of this verse. She is admonished to take care lest she lose off her shoes in wildly traversing the desert after her paramour; or lest she subject herself to burning thirst in her heat. Going barefoot indicated affliction, and probably shame also. See the case of king David when fleeing from Absalom, "He went up Mt. Olivet weeping, with his head covered and his feet bare" (2 Sam. 15: 30). Or see the case of Isaiah (Isa. 20: 2–5).——Then, the figure being dropped, the people are supposed to say, "There is no hope;" it is of no use for us to try to please God. "Besides, we have loved our idols, and after them we will go."——"Strangers" are her heathen paramours, those with whom she practiced the rites of idolatry, and of whom she received them.——The passage suggests that in many cases the plea of despair is not half honest. The heart takes it up simply as an apology for rushing headlong and madly into sin. To quiet conscience and to seem to lend some ear to reason, men try and even pretend to think there is no longer any hope from God, and hence that they may as well get all the good from sin they can while they can get any. The underlying impulse is given in our text, "*I have loved sin*, and will follow it."——This is one of Satan's most subtle devices. He loves to quench the hope of mercy in human hearts, and thus commit men to rash and reckless sinning on the principle of getting all the little good they can from sin while they may. And when he can do no better, he enjoys suggesting this plea of despair as a mere apology. Any thing, so it may answer his purpose of ruining men's souls!

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26. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets.

27. Saying to a stock, Thou *art* my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned *their* back unto me, and not *their* face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

We need to distinguish between on the one hand a sense of shame under the consciousness of wrong-doing, such as is morally wholesome and indicates some remaining conscience; and, on the other, being put to shame, exposed to disgrace, and especially to the chagrin of disappointment under the failure of one's hopes of good. The latter and not the former is here the meaning of being ashamed. The whole people of Israel, both their civil and their religious leaders, are put to shame by their idols, it is so senseless and ridiculous to say to a wooden pillar (a "stock"), "Thou art my father," and to a stone, "Thou art my mother." The stick and the stone would themselves laugh their worshipers to scorn!——They will come to shame yet more when in the hour of their need they shall call on these idols for help and get none. The Lord suggests to them to try the experiment of calling on these new gods for salvation in their calamity.

28. But where *are* thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for *according to* the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

Judah had gods in every city; let her go to them (so many!) in the time of her need, and find her help there!

29. Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

Why, saith the Lord, do ye debate with me, still persisting in self-justification, still apologizing for your sin and condemning God? Ye have all been treacherous and false to me.

30. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

Chastisement had done them no good. It had utterly failed to impress any just sense of their sin, or even to induce serious thought.——No moral state, possible to a moral being, can be more alarming than this—to be so hardened that discipline, adapted for correction and improvement, proves utterly unavailing for any good, and only serves to aggravate the sinner's obduracy and strengthen his committal of heart against God. The Lord's

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mercy is, indeed, "above the heavens;" but no possible greatness of divine mercy can save this hardened sinner in his sins; the best efforts of mercy utterly fail to save him *from* his sins. What, then, can remain for him but "sudden destruction, and that without remedy?"——No special stress is to be laid on the words "your children," as if distinct from yourselves. The phrase, "The children of Judah," was in common use for the Jews.—— The last clause indicates what direction their depravity had taken against God. They had turned against his faithful prophets to persecute them even to death. "Your own sword hath devoured them," as "a destroying lion" does his prey. This book of Jeremiah affords abundant and mournful evidence of such persecution. (See the case of Jeremiah, 11: 21, and 20: 2, and 32: 2, and 33: 1, and 37: 15, 20; and the case of Urijah, 26: 20–23.)

31. O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

"Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" a dreary, desolate abode, a source of no good, but only of sore trial and calamity? Has this been my bearing toward them, and is such their experience with me? Infinitely far from it! Wherefore, then, do my people say, "We are our own masters;" we owe no allegiance to God; let us have our own way, and throw a loose rein on every impulse and passion as if there were no God to hold us in check? Let us never come again to God for either law or favor!——The verb rendered here, "We are lords," occurs in the same strong sense in Hos. 11: 12, "Judah *runs wild* as to God," like a wild beast broken loose. It is unfortunately rendered there, "Judah yet *ruleth* with God." The idea is rather that of scorning all restraint.

32. Can a maid forget her ornaments, *or* a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

The underlying assumption here is, that the Lord's people ought to have regarded their God as their peculiar and preëminent glory, setting their heart on him as their chief good, even as a maid regards her ornaments and a bride her attire. So regarding God, they could by no means have forgotten him.

33. Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.

The words rendered, "Trimmest thy way," mean to manage it cunningly, skillfully; and imply that Judah gave her heart and her best skill to her idol-worship.——The "love" thought of here

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is that of the *harlot.* Harlotry furnishes the illustration of a heart given to idols.——Gesenius renders the last clause, "Therefore thou hast taught thy ways wickedness;" hast trained them into ways of sin. The sentiment is that the people, having given their whole heart to idolatry, studiously wrought their whole life into sin.

34. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

The word "*also*" seems to qualify not "*skirts*" but "*blood,*" the sentiment being, not that God had found blood on their skirts as well as elsewhere, but that he had found the blood of *murder also,* as well as other proof of awful crime. He refers, we may suppose, to the blood of his murdered prophets (as in v. 30), and perhaps also to the blood of innocent children burned in the worship of Moloch—a crime of which Manasseh was preëminently guilty. (See 2 Kings 21: 16.)——God had not found this innocent blood of murdered prophets or of slaughtered children, by any special search; alas! it had been shed in open day, and had become fearfully common "upon all these."

35. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.

Hengstenberg, closely following the Hebrew tenses, renders this verse: "Thou sayest I am innocent; his anger has entirely departed from me. Behold, I reckon with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned." (3: 367). Such was their strange moral blindness, that though they had murdered the faithful prophets of God, and thus innocent blood was found upon them, yet they supposed themselves quite innocent, and thought that God's anger had all passed away.——The words rendered, "will plead with thee," mean, will call thee into judgment.

36. Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

37. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thy hands upon thy head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

The almost obsolete word "gad" well renders the original, in which a touch of irony is apparent. *To spin* comes nearest to its sense. Why dost thou *spin* about, or reel off thy steps in thy eagerness to change thy national policy, now running after Egypt and now after Assyria for help? Thou shalt be made ashamed of thy confidence in Egypt, even as thou hast been of thy trust in Assyria. Thou shalt return from seeking help there (in Egypt)

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with thy hands upon thy head, betokening the deepest shame and disappointment. See 2 Sam. 13: 19, where Tamar, in the depth of her grief, puts ashes on her head, rends her beautiful garments, and "*lays her hand on her head* and goes on crying." The Lord had spurned all the vain confidences of Judah in these foreign nations, and would not let any of them avail for her relief.

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter, vs. 1–5 are connected with chap. 2—with its last two verses very closely, and in general with the strain of the chapter. At v. 6 commences another message, definitely dated in the reign of Josiah. This is supposed by many critics to continue to the end of chap. 6. Perhaps the utmost that can be said is that we find no distinct intimation of a new date or of the commencement of another message, till we reach the seventh chapter. But it is possible to rely too much on expressed dates and formal beginnings and endings, as data for determining the length of each separate message. Why should not some regard be had to the known state of the nation, and the adaptation of the things said to this known state?——The arrangement of the matter composing this entire book of Jeremiah corresponds well with the circumstances of its original production and compilation, especially with these points, viz., that at first the messages were oral only, and not committed to writing; that in process of time (chap. 36: 1, 2) the Lord directed him to write them out, which, with the aid of Baruch, he did; that this first copy, so far as then written, was burned by King Jehoiakim (chap. 36: 21–23); and that then the prophet wrote the substance of it over again, "adding, besides, unto them many like words" (36: 32). Now, in this ultimate copy, the same, we must suppose, which we now have, he would naturally aim to group together the leading points of his various messages, without much careful regard to dates. The date became relatively less important with the lapse of time after the events. The mind rested more on the *ideas* as of chief consequence. Hence I incline strongly to the view that these early chapters were written out the second time, with the leading purpose of grouping together the important truths and points embraced in the original writing, the prophet not deeming it important so long after their first announcement to give the dates precisely, or to indicate the commencement and close of each original message. We shall see reason to conclude that this entire portion, beginning chap. 3: 6, and closing at the end of chap. 6, can not belong entire to the reign of Josiah. Yet the critics who are governed exclusively by the dates, and by other notices of the beginning and closing of a particular message, do and must adopt that conclusion.——The passage, vs. 6–18, puts the sins of Israel and of Judah in antithesis

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with each other; promises good to Israel in future days, apparently for the sake of pressing the people of Judah to repent, and thus secure the same blessings. Vs. 19–25 follow in the strain of rebuke, expostulation, and exhortation to repentance.

1. They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

The first word is literally rendered, as in our margin, "*saying*," and is connected closely with the last verses of the previous chapter, thus: "The Lord rejects thy confidences, *saying*, If a man put away his wife by divorce, and she become the wife of another man, shall he return to her as his wife again? Would not the land be greatly polluted," *i. e.*, by such things? See the law here referred to, Deut. 24: 1–4, "Her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord; and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."——But, wonderfully, God's mercy toward his treacherous, ungrateful bride is so great that he still invites her to return, even though she has gone away and played the harlot with many lovers. The reference to the Hebrew law and the current sentiments of men, is designed to set forth, in a more striking light, the greatness of God's forgiving love toward his apostate people.

2. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lain with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms, and with thy wickedness.

This verse is in the same strain as the passage 2: 23–25, comparing Judah, in the heat of her passion for idol-worship, to the wild animals of the Arabian desert, of whom neither modesty or self-control is expected.

3. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

It was among the conditions of God's covenant with his people, that if they apostatized into idolatry and broke their covenant in this extreme and outrageous form, he would withhold rain from their land. Thus, Lev. 26: 19: "I will make your heaven [sky] as iron, and your earth as brass." And Deut. 28: 23, 24: "And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth

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that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust." Also in this prophet, 9: 12–14, and 14: 1–12, 22.——The usual effect of lewdness appears in Judah, the loss of all modesty and sense of shame. What can be more horrible than this moral obduracy, which has seared the conscience and paralyzed the moral sense, so that the most flagrant sin awakens no compunctions of guilt, and the most tender entreaties touch no answering sensibility?

4. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou *art* the guide of my youth?

5. Will he reserve *his anger* forever? will he keep *it* to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

The word rendered "guide" means a very dear friend—in this case a husband to the young bride, the special protector of her youth. (See Mic. 7: 5.)——Our translators took this verse to be an earnest exhortation to the people to return to God as the husband of their youth. But the Hebrew tenses, in both vs. 4 and 5, seem to forbid that construction. Guided by the tenses and the entire course of thought, I render thus: "Didst thou not just now cry unto me, My father, thou art the husband of my youth?" Also, "Will he (God) retain his anger forever? Will he keep it (burning) to the end? Behold, so thou didst say, and then thou didst do the same wicked things, and didst them with thy might." ——This would seem to refer to the professions of repentance made by the people in the great reform under Josiah's labors, and to the speedy relapse of the people into the same and even worse sins immediately after his death.——The two questions respecting God's keeping anger forever, probably assume that God is so merciful that he may be expected to forgive, and not keep his anger forever against themselves, now that they are professing repentance. The object in this passage is to rebuke the people for relapsing so soon and so utterly after such fair professions of repentance, made withal in words so just and suitable.——Hengstenberg renders the passage: "Hast thou not but lately called me, Friend of my youth art thou? Will he reserve his anger forever? Will he keep it to the end? Behold, so spakest thou, and soon thou didst evil; thou didst accomplish it."——The tenses throughout are those of past time, "thou *didst* call," "thou *didst* speak"(so), "and thou *didst* do the evil things," etc.

6. The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen *that* which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

7. And I said, after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*.

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The passage, v. 6–11, brings the case of Israel, the ten tribes, to the notice of Judah, that the latter may observe the sins of her sister and her consequent punishment, and learn hence her own greater sin and sorer doom. It should be observed that, throughout, Israel is said to be "backsliding," while Judah is called "treacherous." The great sin of Israel had been a relapse—a falling away from the God of their fathers—yet under a less amount of light; and hence with less guilt and less of real treason against God than existed in the case of Judah. For in Judah God had made himself far more fully known. Repeatedly had pious kings and faithful prophets called the people back to God, and repeatedly had they professed repentance and solemnly renewed their covenant with the Lord. But as often they had turned back again to their loved idols, worse than ever, so that treachery had signally marked their national character. This was their damning sin. They would not keep faith with their God. It is for the sake of making this strong feature of their guilt specially prominent, that this comparative view of the two nations is taken here.——Israel had played the harlot in the sense of idolatry. The Lord had warned her to repent and return to herself: she had not done it. There is no record of any general reformation or public renewal of their covenant with God throughout the entire period between the revolt under Jeroboam and the final ruin of the kingdom; *i. e.*, from B. C. 975 to B. C. 722.

8. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

9. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

10. And yet for all this, her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.

The meaning of these verses might be given thus: "I saw that although I had divorced backsliding Israel solely for her adultery (idolatry), yet her treacherous sister did not fear for herself, but went and played the harlot also; and though Israel, by her well-known whoredom, had defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and wood, yet her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned to me with her whole heart, but only with a lie—falsely, treacherously—saith the Lord."——In v. 9, "through the lightness of her whoredom" (idolatry) is not through the trivial nature of it, but through its *inconsiderate recklessness*—the noun coming from a verb which means to make of no account; to make light of.

11. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

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In the comparison between the two, Israel was the less guilty. She justified herself *rather* than Judah—came nearer to being just and acceptable before God. (Compare Ezek. 16: 51, 52.) This can by no means imply that she was *absolutely* just before God, but only that she was relatively more so than Judah.——The case shows forcibly that God estimates guilt in view of the light sinned against, and that he is most deeply grieved and offended by those who, ofttimes reclaimed and as oft relapsing again, exhaust his patience and seem proof against all his efforts to hold them to his love and service. His judgments upon such sinners will be terrible.

12. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; *and* I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I *am* merciful, saith the LORD, *and* I will not keep *anger* forever.

13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

"Toward the north" means toward the northern kingdom—that of the ten tribes. But this is essentially ideal, by supposition only, for that kingdom had long since been broken up and the people taken away into captivity to Assyria. Or perhaps we may suppose some reference to the then existing remnant of the ten tribes in their remote dispersions, as if the Lord would say, The sins of the ten tribes were so very much less than the sins of Judah that I can heartily invite them to return for special mercies.

14. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15. And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

The address here is properly to Israel of the ten tribes, "backsliding" having been her distinctive epithet throughout this entire passage. (See vs. 6, 8, 11, 12.) At the same time the *spirit* of the promise makes it equally good for the people of Judah, the Jews. V. 18 declares that Judah shall come *with Israel* to the enjoyment of these great gospel blessings. Israel is put foremost (as in this antithesis throughout) because her guilt had really been relatively less than that of Judah, and the Lord would fain move Judah to jealousy by the force of this contrast in both guilt and promised blessings.——"I am married to you," means I cheerfully recognize my relation of husband to you, and, in the true spirit of this relation, I come now to solicit your returning love and the reconsecration of your heart to me.——While the word means, generally,

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husband, it means husband with the accessory idea of lordship—the husband as "the head of the wife" and of the household. The word *baal*, a noun made from this verb, means properly lord, master. (See more on the meaning of this passage in notes on 31: 31–34.)——The phrase "take one of a city and two of a family," uses the word "family" in the large sense of tribe, clan, having a greater population than is usual to a city. Selecting so few implies that though they were scattered widely and far, yet divine love would follow them and pluck at least a handful—a few scattering, stray ones—from the general wreck. These would be the nucleus for a noble growth and upbuilding of the new Zion in the latter days. It may also have been the Lord's purpose to encourage every individual penitent. As the covenant had been originally made with the nation, single individuals might feel that, coming singly, they could not hope for mercy. In this promise they might see that every penitent must come in his own personal behalf, and that the gracious Lord despises them not for the fewness of their numbers. Every penitent soul shall find mercy.——"Zion" must be thought of here as she then was, the head and center of Jehovah's kingdom among his people. Hence the phrase means, I will bring them into my church and kingdom. ——"Pastors according to mine heart." Tracing this phrase historically to the circumstances out of which it grew, we come to the pious kings who led the people, not to idols, but to the true God. In its prophetic outlook into gospel times, it must have its fulfillment mainly in Christian teachers of gospel truth. David was the model shepherd of the Lord's flock—"after mine own heart." See 1 Sam. 13: 14: "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and hath commanded him to be captain over his people." So in several parallel passages, *e. g.*, Jer. 23: 4, 5, where the antithesis with "the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of the Lord's pasture"—the wicked kings previously spoken of—shows that good kings, and preëminently king Messiah, are intended: "I will set up shepherds over them who shall feed them;" "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth."——All faithful and true pastors are *from the Lord.*

16. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit *it;* neither shall *that* be done any more.

The little band, restored to obedience and reëstablished in the true Zion, will be eminently prosperous, converts being multiplied exceedingly; and then there shall be a new class of religious institutions. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the "ark of the cov-

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enant" was the chief glory; it lay nearest to the visible presence of Jehovah; was invested with chief sacredness, enshrined in most profound veneration, and guarded most scrupulously from the touch or gaze of the unhallowed. It was the prominent object in the "most holy place;" it held the two tables of the covenant; upon its lid Jehovah's visible glory reposed beneath the wings of the cherubim. This ark, which every Jew was taught to regard as the most sacred symbol of Jehovah's presence, will be spoken of no more. It will not come into mind as a thing loved and cherished; will not be remembered, nor visited, nor will it be reconstructed again to become thereafter the central thing in the religious system.——The word rendered "visit," Hengstenberg renders "missed," in the sense of not feeling the want of it.——The scope of the verse is that the ark, and much more surely all else with it belonging to the external forms and ceremonies of Judaism, will pass away, being superseded by what is altogether better and more glorious. Even the best things in that ancient system will be thought of no more, by reason of the greater value and the surpassing glory of the new system. These are New Testament ideas. The reader may find them throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews; also, in 2 Cor. 3, and elsewhere.

17. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Jerusalem shall then become in the highest sense "the throne of the Lord," for "the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple." He who had given the ancient ark its sanctity by revealing his presence in the form of a visible glory ("the Shechinah") upon the mercy-seat, now, becoming incarnate, comes down to dwell with men, and, indeed, since his resurrection and ascension, still dwells in the hearts of his people by the manifestations of himself through his indwelling spirit. These bodies become "temples of the Holy Ghost." The people of God now constitute the Jerusalem of the gospel dispensation, and the throne of the Lord has its central seat in their living and loving hearts.——Under the benign sway of this reign of the Lord in the hearts of his people, all the nations shall be gathered to his feet, converts to his faith and love. The old mischief—the professed people of God "walking after the stubbornness of their evil hearts"—shall be known no more. This word rendered "imagination," is exceedingly expressive, indicating a most intense perverseness and obstinacy in the love and practice of sin—the very thing against which the Lord and his prophets were so strenuously yet vainly contending in their efforts to reclaim and save the people. The reader may gather the sense of this term and see how grievous the thing it denotes was and forever is to the heart of

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God, by examining carefully the passages where it occurs, *e. g.*, Deut. 29: 19; Ps. 81: 12; Jer. 7: 24, and 9: 14, and 11: 8, and 16: 12, and 18: 12, and 23: 17. He will see that our word *imagination* is too tame to give the sense of this term. He will see that it implies an obstinate, defiant persistence in sin; a heart committed to sinning in the love of it; and a perversion of all God's efforts to reclaim, so that they serve only to strengthen the heart for more and worse sinning. In view of its moral bearings upon the character and destiny of men, what can be more horrible than this?——It is a consolation to know that in the better gospel days, the power of a Savior's love, made manifest to the penitent heart by the present agency of the Spirit, avails to hold God's people to obedience and love, and to save them from this awful apostasy into sin and perverseness therein.——Nor let us lose sight of that other great fact of revelation, viz., that in those gospel times, the spiritual power of God on the hearts of his people will mightily avail to gather the nations to the feet of Jesus. *All* nations—not a part only, but *all* the nations—shall be gathered "to the throne of the Lord to render their cheerful and sincere worship to his name there." The same promise stands in a similar connection (Zech. 2: 10–13): "Sing, and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto thee," etc.——This is the very word of the Lord: Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall it not be?

18. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

It is well to notice the relative attitude of Israel and Judah as it appears throughout this passage, vs. 6–18. Israel is put forward as the less guilty, and hence as the first to receive this great promise (vs. 12–17). Manifestly the aim in this is to rebuke the self-conceit of the Judah of that age, and to show them that God had no sympathy with their self-righteousness, and could only abhor their sin the more for the greater light they had sinned against. But in a great promise which looked forth upon the glorious gospel age, and which was designed to unfold the great depths of divine love and mercy to our race, Judah could not be omitted. Hence, Judah at length comes in with the house of Israel.—— The original word for "with" means properly upon, or in addition to—to imply still that they come in *afterward*, second in rank, in keeping with the strain of the whole passage, which had an eye to humbling the pride and self-righteousness of the Jews of that generation.

The form of this language—"come together out of the land of

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the north to the land given to their fathers"—has led many to expect a literal restoration (yet future) of both Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) to their ancient land.——The scope and aim of this commentary would scarcely afford space for a full discussion of this great question. Let it suffice, then, to remark here, that while the ancient economy stood, demanding the concentration of the people within and around Jerusalem, and withstanding their diffusion among the nations of the earth, such a return would be a blessing; that the Jews did in this manner return under Zerubbabel and with Ezra and Nehemiah; that the use of such phraseology is accounted for by existing facts and the whole genius of that system; but that when we pass over into the Christian age, all the great facts of the case are changed. Israel and Judah can not return thither to set up Judaism again, as this very passage shows, and as the New Testament most abundantly proves; that the genius of the Christian system demands diffusion and resists concentration—thus precisely reversing the genius, the aim, and the work of the ancient dispensation; that the tendencies to the forms of Judaism were terribly antagonistic to the gospel in the primitive age, and hence it is scarcely credible that the Lord will replace that people in their own land, and give the Church that great battle to fight over again; and, finally, that Paul (Rom. 11), looking forward to the future of his countrymen under the triumphant sway of the gospel in the latter days, has not a hint about their returning to their own land, but finds all these promises fulfilled in their being engrafted into God's Church again, and brought meekly and humbly to love and serve the living Savior. Hence, for these main reasons, I can not interpret this promise as involving the yet future restoration of Israel and Judah to their own land, but find in it the far higher and richer blessing that Paul found in it—their reception again into the bosom of the Christian Church, with a power upon Zion as that of life from the dead, that "so all Israel may be saved," since "there shall come out of Zion a Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom. 11: 15, 25, 26.) This subject is discussed more fully in my notes on Ezek. 40–48 chapters.

19. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

After such exceeding great and precious promises, nothing could be more appropriate than to show how the people could avail themselves of these blessings; what they must be and must do to ensure them. Hence the remaining verses of this chapter bear directly to this point.——Israel and Judah were united in v. 18, and thenceforward through the chapter are one, under the common name Israel (vs. 20, 21, 23), and are spoken of as both "treacherous" (v. 20) and "backsliding" (v. 22).——The Lord raises the

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question: "How shall I put thee among *the* children?" where the Hebrew article, somewhat emphatic, gives the sense: Among *my* children; in *my* gospel church; "and [how shall I] give thee this glorious land"—the usual term for the goodly land of Palestine. This keeps up the idea of restoring them to their former land. How can I give *thee*, so long and so deeply apostate, the best land in all the earth, among all the hosts of the nations? ——This question the Lord himself answers: "Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me." (In vs. 4, 5, the Lord charges that they had but lately called him, My father, but had soon turned away and done all the wrong they could. Hence this admonition.)——Truly this is the way: To return to God with humble faith in his parental love and with the filial spirit of a confiding child, and then to prove faithful evermore. These are the conditions of obtaining so great blessings.

20. Surely *as* a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.

Their apostasy from God had been like that of a wife treacherously departing from her husband. The covenant broken in either case is substantially the same. It pledges the undivided, life-long love of the heart, and service of the life. As the obligations of this covenant are preëminently sacred, so their violation is the basest treachery.

21. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping *and* supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, *and* they have forgotten the LORD their God.

22. Return, ye backsliding children, *and* I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the LORD our God.

God hears their voice of penitence and sees their tears. They mourn on the high hills, where their great sins of idol-worship have been committed, and he kindly invites their return, with the promise to heal their backslidings. They hear and respond: "Yea, Lord, with joy we come!" With glad hearts they now declare, Thou alone art the Lord our God!

23. Truly in vain *is salvation hoped for* from the hills, *and from* the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God *is* the salvation of Israel.

This is their testimony, that it is vain for them to look elsewhere than to their God for help; and that in him is truly the salvation of Israel.——The original is somewhat abrupt, indicating the full and overflowing heart of the speakers. The order

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of the Hebrew words is thus: "Truly for a lie is it from the hills, and the multitude of the mountains: truly in the Lord alone is the salvation of Israel."

24. For shame hath devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

Trust in idols lies over against trust in the living God. Apostatizing from their true God, the Jews went over to idols, so that this looking to idols is implied and denounced in v. 23. The idol god is brought out in v. 24 under a new and special name, viz., Shame, or rather with the article, *That Shame!* That shameful thing, alike our burning disgrace and our utter ruin, has brought the blight of famine and desolation upon us and upon our fathers. We lie down under the shame and reproach of having given our trust and our worship to that shameful idol. This common word for shame is used for an idol god in Jer. 11: 13, and in Hos. 9: 10.—Verily the people have come to see their sins in their true light, as both most disgraceful and most ruinous.——This course of thought really includes the first two verses of the next chapter, and may best be considered as addressed to the whole ancient Israel, without distinction between Israel and Judah.——As already said, there is a beautiful pertinence in this sequel to those great promises in vs. 14–18. The problem is to make the revelation of such promises effective on the hearts of the people. What could be better adapted to this result than to adduce the case of Israel, and show how the grace of God availed to bring them to genuine repentance and to right views of their past sins and present duty, interspersing withal the rich promises of God's loving-kindness, that he would receive them with a freely forgiving heart?

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter is connected closely with the preceding, the first two verses, like the preceding context (3: 19–25), addressing Israel as a whole, without distinguishing Judah from the other tribes; while from v. 3 onward, the prophet specially addresses Judah and Jerusalem, solemnly threatening the invasion by the terrible Chaldeans, and blending with this threatening repeated admonitions to deep searchings of heart and radical repentance.

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1. If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

2. And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

The word "return" may be used in two senses—the moral one of repentance, and the physical one of coming back to their own land. Here is a play upon these two senses: "If thou wouldst return, O Israel (to thine own land), then return unto me in penitence: if thou wilt put away thine abominations (idolatries) out of my sight, then thou shalt not *wander*, *i. e.*, be a wanderer and a vagabond—the same verb which is used of Cain, and which led him to name his city Nod.——In v. 2, the word "if" may properly be brought forward from the beginning of v. 1, making the first clause the condition and the last the corresponding promise, thus: *If* thou shalt swear, "The Lord liveth, in truth," etc., then this promise as to the conversion of the nations shall be fulfilled. The Gentile nations shall bless themselves through him (the true God), and glory in him as their own God. When Israel shall reverence her own God heartily and truly, other nations will be induced to believe in him, and to count it their blessedness and their glory to have him their God. Truly this is a word for God's people in every age, testifying that when they walk closely and humbly with God, their example and influence will be a power through God to the salvation of the wicked round about them.

3. For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

Here the Lord turns his address from Israel in general to Judah and Jerusalem in particular.——"Fallow ground" is that which requires plowing, and is set apart to be plowed, and not here (as in our modern phrase), what *has been* plowed. The exhortation, "Prepare your ground for seed-sowing by putting in the plow and rooting out the thorns," means, in the moral sense, exterminate the evils of your hearts; break off your evil practices; make a thorough, radical change in your heart and life.

4. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

The moral significance of circumcision is, putting away every thing impure and unclean. To this the Lord exhorts the people; else will his fury break forth like fire.

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5. Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, Gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defensed cities.

6. Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not; for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

These verses solemnly announce the near impending invasion by the Chaldeans. The people are summoned to assemble for protection in their strongly-fortified cities, and especially in Jerusalem. This is the sense of "setting up a standard toward Zion," as a rallying point toward which the people should flee for safety. The word rendered "retire" (v. 6), means "hasten with your effects;" take what you value most, and fly in haste.——"Evil from the north," in the usage of Jeremiah, means the Chaldean armies. (See 1: 14, 15, and 24: 9.)

7. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; *and* thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

This lion, roused from his lair in the forest thickets, is Nebuchadnezzar. He has already laid waste nations; is coming here.

8. For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

9. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, *that* the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priest shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

In their usual manifestations of deep grief, the orientals put on the coarsest garments, and then gave themselves up to doleful wailings. In that day the heart of the king would sink within him. He would lose all courage, would look upon his case as hopeless, and his country as lost. The priests and prophets—false prophets, and priests apostate from God—will stand amazed and confounded, it is so utterly unlike what they had expected, and even promised the people as from the Lord.

10. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

In what way does the prophet assume that *the Lord* had deceived the people?——Some critics answer, By suffering false prophets

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to mislead them. Others say, By the general encouragement he had given their fathers that they should have peace and prosperity indefinitely long continued in their land. This encouragement, however, was by no means unqualified, but was conditioned on their obedience; for disobedience was threatened with the most terrible expulsion from their land; *e. g.*, Lev. 26, and Deut. 28. ——The former view, moreover, has in its favor the fact that the next preceding verse refers to ungodly priests and false prophets. Through them the people had been greatly deceived, and the Lord had, in a sense, *permitted* these wicked agencies and their sad results. We need not assume that the prophet finds fault with God for what he had done.

11. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,
12. *Even* a full wind from those *places* shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.

This dry, fierce wind from the barren hills of the southern wilderness represents the Chaldean hosts. This wind came not for good purposes—to fan and to cleanse their grain—but was a fuller, stronger wind than is adapted *for those purposes* (not, as in our translation, "from those places"), but a fiercer wind than could be used for cleaning grain. It "shall come," not "unto me," but *for me, i. e.*, to do my work.——"My judgments," rather than "sentence," the English margin being better here than the English text, for plainly this refers to the varied judgments God was about to bring on the land, rather than to any one judicial sentence. The Hebrew word is plural.

13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots *shall be* as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.

These figures are plain; they are also magnificent and appalling. In numbers that appeared as a cloud—his chariots dashing like the whirlwind—his horses swifter than the eagle; the one thought that sinks into the heart is, We are lost! Alas! the nation is gone; wasted, sacked, spoiled!

14. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

Reverting suddenly to their only source of hope and help—the thorough repentance of the people, the putting away of all their heart-sins—he pertinently appends to his description of coming ruin this call to moral cleansing as their only salvation.——"How long shall *vain* thoughts, deceitful, delusive hopes, find a quiet

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lodging place in your souls? Will you not open your eyes to your peril, and read here God's testimony against your sin and guilt?

If (as many critics suppose) this prophecy bears date during the reign of Josiah, it indicates that his reformation was far from being thorough and general; that a fearful depth of moral corruption remained unfathomed and untouched; and that there was abundant work left for this faithful prophet to do in the way of most earnest calls to a deeper repentance, backed up by the terrors of an impending and fearful invasion by the Chaldeans. There is ground for doubt, however, whether this portion of the chapter be not of later date—say in the reign of Jehoiakim. This date seems to me the more probable.

15. For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.

16. Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, *that* watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

17. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD.

Dan lay on the northern border of Palestine, so that the first tidings of the Chaldean irruption from the north would come from that quarter. So also Mt. Ephraim lay north from Jerusalem.—— The "watchers that come from a far country" are besiegers who come to invest the city, and shut the people in on every side, and so *watch over* them to prevent their escape. V. 17 plainly refers to their besieging the city, and gives the reason—the rebellion of Judah against her God.

18. Thy way and thy doings have procured these *things* unto thee; this *is* thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thy heart.

Her own sins had procured all these fearful calamities. It was vital to the moral effect sought that this point should be often reiterated and fully enforced.

19. My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I can not hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

The prophet, rather than the people, is to be regarded as the speaker here; as also in v. 20–26. His heart is oppressed by the bitterness of the doom about to fall upon his people.——The ancients regarded the bowels as especially the seat and home of the sensi-

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bilities. The prophet cries out as one suddenly smitten with acute pains in the bowels. He says also, "My heart moans within me"—personifying his heart, as if it were itself a conscious agent, audibly bemoaning the sad destiny of his beloved country. The same conception appears again (48: 36): "Therefore my heart shall sound (moan) for Moab like pipes;" and in 31: 20: "For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled (moan) for him." Isa. 16: 11, has the same expression.——The cause of this great sorrow is the trumpet-blast for war—the Chaldean armies coming to desolate the land.

20. Destruction upon destruction is cried: for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, *and* my curtains in a moment.

"Destruction upon destruction:" these are the very words of the alarm-cry, shouted through all the land. One form or scene of destruction follows quick upon another, till the whole land is laid waste. The prophet says, "*my* tents," "*my* curtains," as one in full sympathy with his brethren, the people of the land. "Curtains" here are, of course, tent-curtains—the people being thought of as dwelling in tents. This, however, as to most of them, may be merely a poetic conception. In the east, the real nomades of the desert, living a shepherd life, dwelt in tents then, as they do now, and the patriarchs while in Canaan lived the life of shepherds in tents; but in the days of Jeremiah most of the people had more fixed and substantial residences.

21. How long shall I see the standard, *and* hear the sound of the trumpet?

22. For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* sottish children, and they have none understanding; they *are* wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

The question "how long" involves the question "*why*." *Why* does this fearful calamity come at all on this goodly land? V. 22 meets this question as from the mouth of the Lord himself, who replies: "My people are wholly given up to the folly of sin and rebellion. They *act* as if they had never known me. They are cunning and intelligent in doing evil, but have no wisdom, no sense to do good. Sin has terribly perverted their intellectual powers."——This is the common law of sinning in its influence on the mind; it blinds the intellect, and, as to all that is morally good, seems to rob it of reason and good sense, and subject it to the supreme dominion of folly.——This moral state of the people is the reason why such fearful calamities fall on the whole land. Nothing can be more important than to announce this to the people again and again, for all hope of saving the nation lies in their

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possible repentance; and they will not repent till they see their sin and the terrible destruction it must soon bring on the land except as they may avert it by turning heartily, and without delay, to the Lord their God.

23. I beheld the earth, and lo, *it was* without form, and void; and the heavens, and they *had* no light.

24. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.

25. I beheld, and lo, *there was* no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

26. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place *was* a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, *and* by his fierce anger.

In this beautiful and magnificent passage the writer might be thought of as either a poet or a prophet. As a poet, his imagination paints the desolations of his country in images and figures like these. As a prophet, the Lord gives him in vision precisely these views, this panorama of successive scenes of wasting and ruin. If Jeremiah was not a prophet, we should of course take him as a poet, and this passage as simply sublime and exquisite poetry. But since he *is* a prophet, it is better to take this as his account of what he actually saw in vision. In this view the poetic genius evinced in it is to be ascribed not so much to the prophet as to the Spirit that taught him. Yet remarkably God always adapts his modes of presenting truth and the *style* of his communications to the cast and culture of mind of the individual prophet to and through whom he is speaking.——In the present case, the prophet looks out upon the earth, and lo, it seems resolved back to its original chaos. The words here rendered "without form, and void," are precisely those of Gen. 1: 2. He looked up to the heavens; no light was there. All those suns, moons, planets, and stars are extinguished! Darkness reigns supreme and alone! He looked at the mountains; they trembled, and the hills were violently *shaken.* (This is the sense of the original word.) He turns toward the earth; but there is no man there, nor even a bird of the air; they have all fled away. "The carmels"—fruitful fields—have become like the Arabian desert, for the article, "*the* wilderness," seems to give this definite sense to this noun.——From this passage Lord Byron probably obtained the conception of one of his best pieces, "*Darkness;*" darkness going on conquering and quenching the lights of the universe, until one by one they are all put out, and she reigns supreme and alone—herself "the universe."——Nothing is more natural than the figure of darkness to represent calamity. This figure leads the thought of this passage. Yet other images are blended with it.

27. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.

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Remarkably the Lord's threatened doom against this land, though terrible, was not utterly and forever exterminating. A nucleus would remain, a remnant would survive, and the land be repeopled and her cities rebuilt.

28. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken *it;* I have purposed *it,* and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

"For this," does not refer to the point last stated—the sparing of a remnant—but rather to the general threatening of destruction. It is God himself who speaks—who purposes, and will not repent.

29. The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city *shall be* forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.

Here we have an inside view of the city as seen under the panic caused by this Chaldean invasion.

30. And *when* thou *art* spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rendest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; *thy* lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.

The people of Judah, like the generation on whom the flood came, or like the men of Sodom, were still eating and drinking, adorning their persons with paint and with ornaments, as if all unconscious of danger, or rather, as if utterly incredulous and unbelieving as to all these fearful threatenings of judgment from their God. Hence this appeal: "When this spoiling shall become a reality, what wilt thou do?" No matter how delicately clad or gayly ornamented thou mayest be, thy lovers, those heathen nations from whom thou hast sought their idol gods, or (according to the figure of the prophets) with whom thou hast played the harlot, will despise thee and will seek thy very life! How little will it avail thee then to have sought them as thy lovers when they shall have become thy murderers!——So in every sinner's case, there will come an hour of doom in which his sins will become his tormentors, and Satan, to whom he has sold himself to do his bidding, will drop his mask and appear plainly the sinner's real and worst enemy!——In the phrase, "rendest thy face with painting," the eyes rather than the whole face are spoken of. It refers to a practice of painting the eyes so as to make them appear larger than life and in their view more beautiful.

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31. For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, *and* the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, *that* bewaileth herself, *that* spreadeth her hands, *saying*, Woe *is* me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

These are the customary Hebrew figures to express extreme sorrow, affliction, and agony. The whole people are thought of as a desolate female, the daughter of Zion, bewailing her sad lot, spreading forth her hands as if imploring help, and crying, "Woe is me now! my soul is wearied because of murderers!" Armed men are drinking the blood of all my sons and daughters!—— Thus closes this vivid portrayal of the desolations which were near to come on Judah and Jerusalem from the terrible Chaldean armies, unless the people should at once turn to God in penitence and find mercy.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter sets forth yet further the grievous iniquity of the people, both in the line of corrupt morals and of idol-worship, coupled with frequent intimations that such guilt must bring down upon them the retributions of divine justice.——As to the date of this chapter, if we judge of it exclusively by the author's notices of time, and by his formal opening and closing of a distinct message—assuming that all which follows one such date up to the next is one message, and bears the date given at its commencement—we must locate this in the reign of Josiah; as also the entire portion, 3: 6—6: 30. But the thoughtful reader who has studied the history of Josiah's reign, (as given 2 Kings 22, and 23; and 2 Chron. 34 and 35), will often pause in reading these four chapters and ask, Is it possible that this people were so utterly corrupt at any period of Josiah's reign after his thirteenth year? Must we not suppose that when the prophet wrote out the second time these earlier chapters, he paid little regard to precise dates, or to the reconstruction of the messages in their original form, giving his attention chiefly to grouping together the important *thoughts*, so that we may legitimately assume that a large part of these four chapters really belongs to the reign of Jehoiakim?—— The question can not be settled with absolute certainty. I leave it unsettled. One thing is clear; if it does all pertain to the last years of Josiah, his reformation was a deplorable failure, scarcely touching the surface even of public morals, much less the real heart of the people. We hope better things of that reform.

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1. Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be *any* that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

This proposition, "Go, explore the city of Jerusalem, and search diligently for one truth-loving man who executes justice; and if you can find one such, I will pardon the city," gives us a very strong view of the utter and universal degeneracy of the people. It reminds us of Abraham's plea for Sodom, and the Lord's pledge to spare it if he could find ten righteous men in it.——Can it be possible that this was the state of morals during the reign of Josiah? To me it seems inconsistent with the historic records of his reign, and indeed of his own character; and therefore incredible.

2. And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.

To say, "The Lord liveth," in the sense of this passage, is to take the solemn oath by Jehovah. This oath, then as now, was a solemn recognition of the existence of the one true God, and not of his existence alone, but of his moral government—his execution of justice, and his award of righteous retribution on men for falsehood and wrong. The men of Jerusalem swore by Jehovah, but this did not hold them to the truth. They swore falsely and perjured themselves.——Scarce any thing can be a surer test of the moral sentiments of a people than this. If the fear of God will not hold men under the solemnities of the oath in the name of Almighty God, it is plain that there is no truth in their hearts, and no power of conscience to restrain them from any sin they may find it convenient to commit.

3. O LORD, *are* not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, *but* they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

Most surely the prophet is right in assuming that the eyes of God are upon the truth. He loves truth, jealously defends it, and will righteously punish every violation of it.——The word rendered "grieved," applies rather to physical pain than to mental, and hence favors this sense: They have not *felt* it, have hardened their nerves against it.——"Consumed" is a very strong word for this place, yet the sense no doubt is, that the Lord applied his later chastisements far more severely because they did not seem to feel his earlier inflictions. So he is wont to do.——The Hebrew idiom

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has it, "Make their *face* harder than a rock;" but this brazen face is an index of the heart, and is of small account in any other view than as truly revealing the heart.

4. Therefore I said, Surely these *are* poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, *nor* the judgment of their God.

5. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, *and* the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, *and* burst the bonds.

Then the prophet said, It must be that this description applies only to the poorer, lower, and more ignorant classes. They are thus reckless of God and of their moral obligations, because they know no better. So he said, I will go to the great men and speak to them, for they have known the way of God and his moral law, *i. e.*, his "judgments" as to the duties of men. But to his amazement and grief, he found the great and rich men still worse than the poor. They had utterly and altogether broken through the restraints of God's law.——This indicates a fearfully corrupt state of public morals. When those who had most knowledge of God and duty were most reckless and most hardened in sin, what hope could remain for the nation?

6. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, *and* a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, *and* their backslidings are increased.

Destruction surely comes of such flagrant wickedness. The destroyers are here compared to the lion, to the nightly prowling wolf, and to the leopard who watches stealthily for his prey, and springs upon it unawares. So their enemies would watch at their city gates and none could escape. All this because their sins were so many and as the last verb most naturally means, were *so strong*, *i. e.*, because their hearts were so invincibly and incorrigibly set in their wickedness.——"Evening wolves" come in as a figure for a destroying army in Hab. 1: 8, and Zeph. 3: 3. Both these prophets were contemporary with Jeremiah.

7. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by *them that are* no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

Some critics read the first clause, "Shall I pardon thee for this?" The sense is not materially affected by the proposed

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change.——To swear by false gods, recognized them as really divine, and hence, was one of the greatest sins.——In rendering the next clause, "When I fed them to the full," our translators followed the Hebrew marginal reading, instead of the Hebrew text. This latter is the verb *to swear*, to bind by an oath and solemn covenant. Since this sense is at least equally pertinent, it is better to follow it, because the reading has most authority. The sense then is, Though I had made them swear allegiance to me, taking them into solemn covenant with myself, yet they broke this sacred covenant, committing adultery, in the sense of idolatry, and trooping off eagerly to harlots' houses (idol-temples).

8. They were *as* fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.

Here, also, critics debate over the root of the word rendered "in the morning." The other root gives the sense of roaming about under the impulses of animal lust. The difference affects only the nature and force of a figure of speech. The general sentiment of the verse is clear, it being essentially the same as in chap. 2: 23, 24.

9. Shall I not visit for these *things?* saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

How can the Lord endure such horrible wickedness, such violations of good morals toward men, and such abuse and insult toward himself? He can not refrain from severe and almost exterminating judgments. As a moral Ruler of the universe, he can not, even if he would, escape the responsibility of punishing such sin and of giving expression to his abhorrence of such iniquity.

10. Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they *are* not the LORD'S.

The Lord addresses the enemies and destroyers of Jerusalem. The restriction, "Make not a full end," implies (as above 4: 27) that the Lord would save a remnant, and replant his people once more.——The word rendered "battlement," has only one well-established meaning, that of *tendrils* of the vine, or slips set for propagation. Israel is not infrequently presented as the Lord's vine. (See chap. 12: 10, and Isa. 5: 1–7, and 27: 11, 12, and Ps. 80: 8–16.) Here the Lord commissions the destroyer to take away all her tendrils, because they are not the Lord's. He must disown them because they have utterly apostatized from him. Essentially the tendrils of this vine are the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Under this commission, the stock remains for new growths in the future.

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11. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.

This verse gives a reason why they can no longer be accounted the Lord's people. They have been exceedingly treacherous toward God, breaking their covenant with him in ways most insulting and abusive.

12. They have belied the LORD, and said, *It is* not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:

13. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word *is* not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.

Those reasons are continued here.——In fixing upon the precise sense of the phrase, "They have belied the Lord," the choice lies between the following supposable meanings: (1). They have proved false to God by treacherously violating their covenant with him. But this has been said already. (2.) They have denied the veracity of his word as it came through his professed prophets.—— (3.) They have denied his moral attributes, and practically his existence as the one only true God.——The second, if carried out legitimately, involves the third by logical inference.——The same phrase occurs in the original of Josh. 24: 27, and Isa. 59: 13.——From the case itself, as here presented, it is plain that the people at least denied the truth of the words that came to them from God through his prophet—so much, and perhaps more. The clause that immediately follows strongly favors the third view above given, viz., that of denying the existence and attributes of Jehovah—refusing to recognize him as the true God. We might translate, "They lied against God, or concerning God;" and then they went on to say, "It is not *he*." Now, here it should be noted that the Lord repeatedly uses this very phrase, "I am *he*," to affirm his eternal existence and godhead. (See Deut. 32: 39, and Isa. 43: 10, 13.) Hence it can scarcely be doubted that this is the sense in which they belied God. They disowned his essential divinity.——"Neither shall evil come upon us," etc., shows that they put no confidence in what the Lord's prophets had said. This is implied also in v. 13, which continues the sayings of these wicked men. The prophets, *i. e.*, God's true prophets (said they), shall be taken for mere wind; we will put no more confidence in their words than if they were only a blast of wind.——The sense of the next clause I take to be, "there is no voice from God among them," literally, there is no speaker, *i. e.*, who *speaks* divinely, from God, among them.——"Thus shall it be done unto them," means that all the dreadful things they threaten against us, the people of Judah and Jerusalem, shall come upon themselves. "It shall be done thus to them" as they pretend to say shall be done to us.——So understood, this passage reveals the shocking hardihood, skepticism, and ripened depravity of the people.

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14. Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

The meaning of this is that all the words of the Lord against them by the prophet should be fearfully fulfilled, to their sure destruction.

15. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it *is* a mighty nation, it *is* an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

16. Their quiver *is* as an open sepulcher, they *are* all mighty men.

17. And they shall eat up thy harvest, and thy bread, *which* thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thy herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

Here, again, we have the Chaldeans. They are surely coming to lay the land desolate. They are both powerful and ancient; in power, coming up at that time to be the conquerors of all Western Asia; in antiquity, running back to the earliest ages after the flood. Their language bore some affinity to the Hebrew, yet was so unlike that the Jews would not understand it.——The comparison of their quiver to an open sepulcher is graphic, significant of death and destruction.——It is remarkable that the prophet returns so often to this fearful prediction of invasion and ruin from the north, the Chaldean power. No doubt it was the merciful design of God to appeal to the fears of the people, and thus arouse them to serious consideration of their danger, and so of their great sin. For the same reason the Bible, and especially the New Testament, reveals the fearful doom of the wicked in the world to come.

18. Nevertheless, in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.

Again we have this merciful limitation, "I will not make a full end with you." Fearful as this destruction and captivity were to be, a remnant would survive, and Judah be again restored.—— So God is wont to blend mercies with his judgments all along through this world of probation. But no such limitation appears in the testimony given in the Scriptures as to the final destiny of the lost! Nowhere does the Lord say, Nevertheless, I will not make a full and final end of your hopes and happiness! In this particular, the contrast between this judgment and that of the incorrigibly wicked in the world of doom is palpable and appalling!

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19. And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these *things* unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land *that is* not yours.

Once more we meet the oft-recurring question, *Why* is this terrible judgment sent upon the land and people of the Lord? Here the people are supposed to ask this question: God gives the answer. By a quick turn upon the words "strange" and "land,' the antithesis is made very pointed so that the gist of the answer could not well be misapprehended or forgotten. "As ye have served strange gods in your own land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land not your own." "Strange," here, as always in the Bible, is in the sense not of extraordinary or uncouth, but simply of *foreign;* belonging to another nation. They had taken home to their own country the gods of other nations. For this sin they must themselves be borne away to those other countries as captives and bondmen.

20. Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,

21. Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:

"Without understanding" is, in Hebrew, "without heart." But the word "heart" is used here, and not infrequently, for the mind considered in its relations to moral subjects and moral duties. To be "without heart" is to have stultified the intellect and overborne reason and conscience, so as to be practically as if without either. To "have eyes, and yet not see;" to "have ears, and yet not hear," puts the case of the self-hardened sinner with much truth and force. This is the damning sin of the wicked. To know their duty, and yet to live as if they knew it not; to have noble capacities for attaining all needful moral truths, and glorious opportunities for doing all duty, and yet to use neither, but deliberately to paralyze the one, and neglect or even spurn away the other; this is the great sin of all sins; this it is that dooms the soul to hopeless exclusion from God and heaven—to hopeless sinning and woe.

22. Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand *for* the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it can not pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

This representation of Jehovah as terrible in the greatness of

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his power, is surpassingly grand. Scarce any of his manifestations in nature are more so. When the waters of the vast deep are driven fiercely by the tempest, they toss wildly about the largest ships ever built by man, and even lift and bear away rocks vast and ponderous; yet, when they reach that low line of sand-beach where God has set their limit, they seem marvelously shorn of their power. The tiny sands build up the mighty breakwater, because God sets them there to mark the bounds beyond which the furious waves may not pass. In other words, that noiseless, invisible power of God which we are wont to call gravitation, holds them to their bed, and with all their wrath they can not breast its pressure or brave its rebuke.——And, now, shall not that God be feared who is so great, and who is clothed with power so transcendently sublime? *Shall not* mortal man tremble before him?

23. But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

The one all potent reason why the majesty and glory of God are so powerless on the people is, that they have a revolting and rebellious heart. They are fearfully *committed* against serving and obeying this great God. Hence, they will not think seriously and solemnly of his power and of his excellent majesty. They intensely choose to drive away all thoughts of God, and to quench all sense of his claims upon their love and homage.

24. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

25. Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withholden good *things* from you.

This moral blindness and extreme aversion to recognize the claims of God upon them for love or gratitude, account for their failure to trace their rains to his kindness, or their droughts to his displeasure for their sins. They do not love to say, "Let us fear" (in the sense of love and reverence) "the Lord our God, who giveth us rain in its season."——In that climate there were two rainy seasons; the first, succeeding the long drought of summer, prepared the ground for seed-sowing (falling in the last days of October, and in November); the second, in March and April, was their "latter rain," and served to mature their harvests. The word "reserveth to us" has the sense of carefully guarding, watching over to keep and bring forth in its season. It was their sins that had shut off their needed rains, and denied them the income of their harvests.

26. For among my people are found wicked *men:*

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they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

27. As a cage is full of birds, so *are* their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

"Wicked men" must be taken here in a specially strong, emphatic sense, as the word "sinner" is often in the New Testament, *e. g.*, when applied to the publicans. For, after describing the masses of the people as so exceedingly corrupt, to say that there were found among them some ordinary sinners would be too tame. These are men of murderous spirit. They waylay and rob men, and make themselves rich and great by such means. Their houses are full, not of deceit so properly, as of the *fruits* and *avails* of their deceit.

28. They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

Living deliciously on the fruits of others' toil, their skin really shines with fatness; they surpass the common standard of wicked doing; they prosper, though their bearing toward the fatherless is not just, but unjust.

29. Shall I not visit for these *things?* saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Can it be thought possible that God can wink at such wrong, or let go unpunished such a nation as this? Never, while he is God! Even Thomas Jefferson could say, "The Almighty has no attribute in his nature which can take sides with a nation that tramples down the poor, the fatherless, and the oppressed!"

30. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;

31. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it* so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Throughout this corrupt age of the nation, there were numerous false prophets, pretending to have messages from God, but of all living men most wicked and most palpably led by Satan. The priests themselves, horribly corrupt, made common cause with them, and availed themselves of their aid to augment their own influence. The people enjoyed their delusive promises of peace and prosperity. Hence, the Lord fitly asks, What will they all do *in the latter end*, the final issue of such a course of horrible wickedness?——A case illustrating the relation of the false prophets

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to the corrupt priests, the way the former class used the latter, and gave them augmented power which they could use, may be seen in chap. 29: 24–29.

CHAPTER VI.

The same general strain of remark continues through this chapter. Judging from its scope, we must assign it to the same date as the two next preceding. It paints the sins of the people; rebukes their hypocrisy; and repeats the fearful threatenings of the Chaldean invasion.

1. O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.

The word rendered "gather yourselves to flee," seems rather to mean "hasten your escape with your effects;" gather all you have and flee. Tekoa lay on high ground, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, and may, perhaps, be chosen here for the sake of the paranomasia with the word for blowing the trumpet, as we might say, Sound forth the trumpet blast in the trump-blast city, if we had a city of that name. One object of such a play on the name of a city, was to impress the call on every mind, and cause it to be remembered.——Beth-haccerem—"house of the vineyard" —according to the testimony of Jerome, lay on a mountain between Jerusalem and Tekoa. Jerome lived and wrote in Bethlehem, near by, and even within sight of Beth-haccerem.——Signals by fire would indicate the pending invasion. This seems to have been the common signal with the ancient Greeks and Romans for danger, waved violently to denote war.——The evil coming from the north, here as before (1: 14, 15, and 4: 5, 6, and 5: 15), and also after (6: 22), is the Chaldean power.

2. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate *woman.*

3. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch *their* tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place.

In v. 2, the point of comparison is her weakness and delicacy to withstand a fierce assault from a powerful foe.——In v. 3, the word rendered "comely" means "one who dwells in the house," and who hence is of delicate complexion and fragile endurance. It may be implied that her Lord *had* regarded her as such a

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woman, needing and enjoying his protection. But she is protected no longer.——The Chaldean army investing the city, is compared to a company of shepherds pitching their tents around a city—a familiar oriental scene. Each band occupies its own post and carries on its work of destruction, even as a like number of shepherds would each feed his flock in his own locality.

4. Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

5. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.

The first part of the verse is the supposed language of the enemy. The word "prepare" is, in Hebrew, "*sanctify* war against him;" declare war with solemn religious rites, invoking the aid of their gods.——To "go up at noon," perhaps, indicates that they had no fear of making an open assault at mid-day; or, since they say also, "Let us go up by night;" the thought may be that, in their earnest and fearless zeal, they shrink neither from the intense heats by day, nor from the chill and the dews of night. No extremes of heat or cold, no discomfort, will deter them.——The last part of verse 4 is the exclamation of the besieged: "Alas! darkness comes on; our day of prosperity closes! See how the shadows lengthen out—for a woful night of gloom!" But some critics put these words in the mouth of the besiegers, who are sad that night comes on too soon for their work.

6. For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this *is* the city to be visited; she *is* wholly oppression in the midst of her.

7. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually *is* grief and wounds.

The ancient mode of besieging walled cities was by raising a high mount outside, around the city, as high or even higher than the city walls. In this work, as well as in their machinery, trees and timber would be used.——This visitation of judgment on the city was due her for her oppression of her poor and of her servants. (See chap. 34: 8–22.) Oppression had become her ruling passion. Her wickedness poured forth its developments and manifestations as a fountain does its waters.

8. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

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The word rendered "*depart*" from thee, means be alienated, be torn away; implying the strong and spontaneous love of God for his people, and the grief of heart with which he should give them up to destruction if he must. It would be so much more gratifying if they would receive instruction and repent, so that he could still clasp them to his heart and shield them from all harm.

9. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thy hand as a grape-gatherer into the baskets.

This Chaldean enemy will ultimately sweep the land clean of its inhabitants, as the last grapes are gleaned thoroughly and taken away in a basket. As grape-gatherers return with their baskets again and again, so the Chaldeans came at least three times to pillage and to bear away captives.

10. To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear *is* uncircumcised, and they can not hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

11. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with *him that is* full of days.

The prophet sees and feels the solemn urgency of the case, and therefore personally longs to have his messages reach the hearts of the people and bring them to repentance. But, alas! he meets only resistance, hard hearts scorning his words and hating his divine Master. Where can he find a man to hear? "To whom shall I speak and bear this testimony? Who will hear it?" An "uncircumcised ear" opens not itself to God and has never been consecrated to him—circumcision being the ancient rite of consecration.

"*Can not* hearken," is of course a *moral* not a physical disability. They *can not* hear, because they do not love and choose to hear. They intensely hate and loathe the word of God. It is to them a thing of reproach for which they feel no respect. They would account it only a disgrace to heed it.——So (most strangely) wicked men are wont to be ashamed of reading their Bibles, or of being known to pray, or to fear God or seek his favor.——The prophet's view of their moral state, coupled with his sense of their danger, and more yet of their great guilt toward God, fires his soul most intensely. He sympathizes with God in his sense of their unutterable iniquity, and of the demand of justice for their punishment. Hence he says, "I am full of the *heat* of the Lord," his burning indignation against such iniquity; and I can not withhold the mes-

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sages God sends by me though they are threatenings of terrible judgments; "I will pour them forth," etc.

12. And their houses shall be turned unto others, *with their* fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.

13. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one *is* given to covetousness: and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

When God puts forth his hand to destroy, the work will be done most fearfully and most surely.——Covetousness (the passion for unrighteous gain is the sense of the original) was one of the crying and damning sins of the people.——Prophet and priest alike were false, pretending to speak for God, but really speaking only for the "father of lies." That the fearful degeneracy of the people was largely due to the influence of false prophets and corrupt priests is repeatedly intimated in the records of those times. But for their influence, the true prophets would very probably have been heard to purpose and the people have been saved.

14. They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.

The "hurt" is of course the *wound* inflicted by God in his chastisements. The context and the original word concur in demanding this sense. Yet here we are not to think primarily and mainly of the *wounding* of one's person by sickness, or of one's estate by losses, or of one's social sensibilities by bereavement; but rather of that smiting of the soul which touches the conscience, quickens a sense of sin and guilt, and enforces the fearful conviction that all is wrong between one's self and God. This breaking of man's proud spirit under a conscious sense of sin and guilt, considered as produced or at least quickened by God's chastisements, is precisely the thing here meant by "the hurt of the daughter of my people." To say to persons so smitten, "All is well," when God means that nothing is well; to say "Give yourself no anxiety," when God is doing his utmost to trouble their conscience and make them fearfully anxious, is to gainsay all that God would say, and to counteract all he would do for the conviction, repentance, and salvation of his professed people.——This case should be an admonition against this form of sin in all ages and under all circumstances. When God is using his agencies of discipline and affliction for good moral ends, let us take care lest we counteract his efforts! It is fearful at such a time to whisper comfort to smitten hearts by saying, "For no sin of yours;" "No hand of God in this;" "Bear up under your inevitable fate and make as little of it as possible." It were infinitely better to say nothing than to speak at random, or to speak without noticing or understanding

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what God aims to accomplish.——If it be asked, How can we know what God's purposes are? the answer is ready. Sufferings sent by the Lord in his providence *upon his children* in this world are *always disciplinary.* God never hurls his arrows at random and without a purpose. As to his people, this purpose is not punitive but is corrective—to make them the more surely and abundantly "partakers of his holiness."——It might be too much to affirm of the wicked that all the affliction God visits upon them in this world is designed by him for their good and for no other end; yet we may say that much of it manifestly is, and that it is our wisdom always to help forward this result and to assume that God looks for our coöperation toward this result, and this only. If he has punitive ends in view in some cases, he can manage them without our aid, and as to those bearings, does not ask our coöperation.

15. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

To be shameless in sin is one of the darkest indications of hopeless obduracy. How surely such sinners must fall before the righteous visitations of Jehovah!

16. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein.*

17. Also I set watchmen over you, *saying,* Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

The "old paths" were the ways of their early fathers, who walked humbly with God, and adhered zealously to his worship as opposed to the worship of idols. So walking, they would find rest and peace. This pending invasion need not alarm them. They would also have peace of soul, a consciousness of right-doing, and a sense of God's favor. But they said, "No, we will not walk in those ways."——The "watchmen," set of God over the people, were the true prophets, their spiritual shepherds. The same figure is drawn out more fully, Ezek. 3: 17, and 33: 7.

18. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what *is* among them.

19. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

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With some play upon the word "hear," the Lord says, Since they will not *hear* the trumpet-cry of alarm from my servants, the watchmen, I summon all the nations to *hear* the merits of this case; to come and learn what is done among this people. Let them see what fearful sins they have committed, and how obdurate their hearts are against all the appeals of my love and all the threatenings of my judgment. Let them first witness the sins of this people; then the punishment I shall inflict therefor.

20. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

The people still kept up the routine of the temple-worship. In this they made use of incense obtained from Sheba, a province of Arabia Felix, celebrated for its rich spices—whence, some centuries before, came their famous queen to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The "sweet cane," or calamus, is supposed to have come from India, the "far country." It would be only like the common human nature of our age if the Jews of Jeremiah's time gave the more to God in costly spices *as* they gave him less of the true homage of their hearts. By a sort of compromise of their own, men are often fain to make up in the outer what they choose to lack of the inner—lavishing in costly offerings of sweet spices inversely as they give the love of their hearts to God.——But of what use were those costly spices of which God speaks? The people had no heart in their worship of God, and hence he could have no pleasure in their sacrifices. This last statement should be taken in its strongest sense. So far from merely taking no pleasure, he loathed and abhorred them. So it must be evermore when worship is offered to God in which the offerer gives not his heart.

21. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbor and his friend shall perish.

"Stumbling-blocks" are agencies for their physical destruction—not for their moral fall, according to the customary modern sense of this phrase.

22. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.

23. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they *are* cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

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Here we have the Chaldeans again delineated in forms of appalling terror.

24. We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.

25. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy *and* fear *is* on every side.

The "fame" is the report, the tidings of their approach. It unnerved the nation. They were utterly unable to cope with such a power. They knew that help from the God of their fathers could not be reasonably expected, because they had revolted from him. Indeed, they had good cause to know that this invasion was the scourge of God on them for their sins. Under such a conviction, the bravest heart might well quail in terror and writhe in anguish, for it is sheer madness for man to summon and stiffen his hardihood to dare Jehovah's vengeance!——There would be no safety in going forth into the field or into the highways for flight, for the sword of the enemy was on every side.

26. O daughter of my people, gird *thee* with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, *as for* an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

It only remained for the people of Judah and Jerusalem ("the daughter of my people") to give themselves to mourning. There could be no help for them, since they *would* not repent, and therefore God *could* not pardon.

27. I have set thee *for* a tower *and* a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.

Since this passage (v. 27–30) speaks of the prophet as trying, proving the people, in the sense of proving and assaying mineral ores, it is plain that the idea of "*tower*," here, is inadmissible. The original shows that it should rather be a *trier*, an assayer, as of metals. "To know and try their way" keeps up the same figure. But, on the word rendered "fortress," critics disagree. If we take the orthography of our received Hebrew text, we must read it "fortress," and refer to chap. 1: 18 for its meaning, viz., that God would make the prophet strong against whatever opposition or difficulty he might encounter, even as a strong fortress that defies assault. If it were admissible to change the vowels slightly,* or assume that the present orthography is equivalent to this, then it might be read: "I have set thee an assayer of my people, to separate the dross from the gold ore." Neither sense is bad.

*(*i. e.*, to מִבְצָר)

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28. They *are* all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: *they are* brass and iron; they *are* all corrupters.

"Grievous revolters" is, in the original, intensely strong—the superlative degree of revolt, corruption, and wickedness. They are only brass and copper, when they should be gold and silver. They make others corrupt, marring all they touch.

29. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.

On the first clause, critics are divided between these two senses: (*a.*) The bellows are scorched, *i. e.*, under the intense heat. (*b.*) The bellows breathe hárd, blow violently. The former is best supported by the usage of the word.——The remaining portion may be read, "By their fire the lead is consumed; the refiner toils in vain; the wicked are not removed;" or perhaps better, keeping up the figure, the worthless dross is not separated. The idea of the verse is, that the people, being assayed as ores from the mine, can not be purified; they afford no precious metal. Every thing passes off in dross, and the process proves the utter worthlessness of the material subjected to this trial. The people are all and only dross.

30. Reprobate silver shall *men* call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter. The world will be compelled to call this people of Judah and Jerusalem "rejected silver;" refuse matter; proved to be good for nothing. The Lord hath assayed them, hath found them worthless, and hath rejected them.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter, and the two next succeeding, manifestly constitute one message. Not only is there no evidence of closing one message and beginning another throughout this portion, but the same subject continues on through the entire passage. It might also be remarked that chap. 8 commences by connecting what follows with what precedes, using the words "At that time," etc., and chap. 9 is closely connected with chap. 8 by its train of thought. We may then safely account this portion (chap. 7–9) as one message.——But it appears here without date. Yet a clue to its date is found in the evidence of identity as to circumstances and time between this message and that which commences in

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chap. 26. This evidence of identity as to circumstances and time lies in the following particulars: (1.) In each message the prophet was directed to go and stand in the temple and deliver it to the people who congregated—going out and coming in—there. (See 7: 2, and 26: 2.)——(2.) One of the salient points in each message, the one which manifestly attracted most attention, was God's threatening to make this temple like Shiloh, *i. e.*, to destroy it utterly. Compare 7: 14 with 26: 6.——(3.) The burden of the exhortation and the only condition of sparing the temple, city, and people, is in each the same—"amend your ways and your doings." (See 7: 3–7, with 26: 13.)——(4.) Further evidence of identity as to time, place, etc., appears in the fact, that while the passage chap. 7–9 gives the message in full with the usual variety—the portrayal of their sins; exhortations to repentance; threatened judgments to enforce it; somewhat full particulars as to the source and character of those judgments; the prophet's sympathy and grief in view of these pending calamities, indicating how fully he believed them, and how near he thought them to be, etc.; on the other hand, chap. 26 is plainly a case of renewed mention for a special purpose. For, the message is not given in detail as in chap. 7–9. Its heads of thought only are referred to, and this manifestly for the purpose of introducing new matter not touched at all in the passage chap. 7–9. This new matter includes the personal peril into which the prophet was brought by this message; the persecution instigated against him; the efforts made to suppress his messages and compel him to desist from his work, and the circumstances connected with this opposition and persecution. Hence, we have a manifest reason for introducing again this remarkable prophecy given in the temple.——This renewed mention (chap. 26) gives us the date, viz., "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim."

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2. Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all *ye* of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.

Some obvious reasons for choosing this place, the gate of the temple, for the announcement of this message are, that the people gathered here in great numbers, "entering in at these gates to worship the Lord;" that his message aimed specially to testify God's abhorrence of their self-righteous reliance on the mere forms of their temple-worship while their hearts were utterly far from God, and their lives shamefully immoral and abominable; and yet further, he was to predict the utter ruin of that very temple for these sins of the people who professed to worship God there. These circumstances made this the most fitting place for the announcement of this eventful and solemn message.

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3. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

These first words give us the substance in a nutshell: "Make good your ways and doings;" make them right; this done, I will cause you to dwell here indefinitely. Ye shall have this temple to enjoy, and not the temple alone, but the city and all your national privileges.

4. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, *are* these.

The "lying words" referred to are those of the false and lying prophets. They assured the people that the Lord could not destroy the city and the nation, because this was *his* temple, and he would surely preserve it from destruction, and would save the people because of the temple and because of their worship of God in it. The strong confidence which they reposed in this protection and safeguard, is indicated in the threefold repetition, as much as to say, It can not be possible that God will destroy this city as Jeremiah has said; for see! here is the temple of the Lord —the very temple of the Lord God of Hosts! Will God destroy *his own temple*?——"Are these," means these courts, walls, apartments; the altar, the most holy place, etc.—all these that you see here are parts of God's own temple, for the prophet was then standing in the midst of the temple.

5. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor;

6. *If* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt;

7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever.

This makes their moral duty toward their fellow-men exceedingly emphatic, and shows that one of the great, crying, and fatal sins of the nation was its rotten social morals, the utterly corrupt moral life of the people. It was not their idolatry merely that ruined them. They had become horribly oppressive, cruelly unjust, fearfully false to all the duties of the second table of the law, as well as to those of the first. In all these things they must thoroughly amend their ways, else the Lord could not and would not let them remain in that land.——The last clause of v. 7, rendered "forever and ever," seems to mean "*from* of old *to* the long, indefinite future."

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8. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that can not profit.
9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;
10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?
11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the LORD.

The "lying words" here, as above (v. 4), are those of their false prophets, saying that the forms of worship in the temple would surely shield them from God's judgments.——"That can not profit," should be taken (as we often find it) in the strong sense, not of a mere negation of profit, but of the *opposite* of profit, viz., ruin; words that will ruin you.——"Delivered," in the clause, "delivered to do all these abominations," is the important word in this passage. It does not mean fated, predestined, doomed, as some have taken it to mean, but "delivered" in the sense of *saved*. Will you commit murder, and then come into this temple and say, "*we are saved*," so that we may still go on safely to commit all these abominations? The idea of the false prophets which God here so strongly rebukes, was that they were saved from all danger of incurring his displeasure and his judgments for their sins, by their religious worship in this temple. This worship (in their view) bought for them an absolute plenary indulgence for all the sin they might choose to commit. They were so *saved* by it that they could go on and perpetrate all these abominations named in v. 9, stealing, murder, adultery, false swearing, and idolatry, and yet have nothing to fear!—a most magnificent system of indulgences those false prophets had gotten up, long time in advance of Papal Rome!

This would be, indeed, making the house upon which God's name had been called, "a den of robbers," where they might nestle securely, might house and shelter themselves against all danger from a just and holy God! Alas! how little did they appreciate his unutterable abhorrence of such worship as theirs, and of such a moral life no less! "Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord." Plainly he would have them understand that he shall take cognizance of it to some purpose!

12. But go ye now unto my place which *was* in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

Shiloh, situated (Judg. 21: 19) "on the north side of Bethel, and on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem;" the location of the tabernacle from the days of Joshua

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(18: 1) to the death of Eli (1 Sam. 4), lay within the kingdom of the ten tribes, and had been utterly desolated when that kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrian arms, B. C. 722, *i. e.*, one hundred and eleven years before Jehoiakim came to his throne. The Jews might look upon the doom of Shiloh, and see that God did not shield a wicked city from ruin because it had been the residence of his own visible glory among his people, and the one place of the required temple worship. They might see that it was for the wickedness of his people Israel that God had laid that place desolate, and in this fact might read their own doom!

13. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

14. Therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

15. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, *even* the whole seed of Ephraim.

It aggravated the guilt of the people greatly that they had persisted in all their sins despite of the reiterated warnings he had sent them by his servants, the prophets.——The oft-recurring expression, "rising up early and speaking," or "sending," is both beautiful and strong. As a man in earnest and full of his mission is up betimes in the morning to begin, so God represents himself as wakeful and active, giving up the live-long day to his work, laboring with unwearied patience to reclaim and to save his people, but all in vain! Therefore this house (the temple), although it be called by my name, and though it be the place that I gave to you and to your fathers as your place of worship, I will surely destroy as I have destroyed Shiloh.——"Casting them out of his sight," as he had their brethren of the kingdom of Ephraim, means sending them away from the land where his presence had been with them into a distant captivity. Canaan was hallowed by so many sacred associations, God had dwelt there so long, it was no fit abode for a people so horribly corrupt as they!

16. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

This prohibition of prayer, this forbidding the prophet, and, by implication, all other good men to pray any longer for the reprieve and pardon of the Jewish nation, most terribly sealed their doom! In no other way could the Lord testify so absolutely to his purpose to destroy and spare not, showing mercy no more! How this must have sunk into the heart of the weeping prophet! Alas! (we may hear him say) there is no more hope for my be-

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loved country. Prayer is cut off and she is doomed to ruin!—— Here let us pause to consider that what is thus shown to be true of nations as such may be true also of individuals. As nations may become so corrupt, and may sin so outrageously against God and our common humanity, that he can not wisely and safely pardon or even overlook, but must sternly punish, so it may be in this world with individual sinners as well. They, too, even this side of the grave, may reach a point in moral hardihood which repels the Spirit of God utterly, and hence shuts off all hope of repentance, and leaves no longer any place for availing prayer on their behalf. Much as God loves to hear prayer, and much as he loves to show mercy, the ends of justice and the exigencies of his moral government may require him to suppress his pity and let judgment fall on the guilty.——A fearful truth for ungodly men to ponder! How should it startle them to the danger of resisting the Holy Ghost! How should it open their eyes to the fearful peril of persistent sinning against the loving-kindness of God, their gracious Father, and of Jesus their bleeding Savior!——If Christian people ask, Who shall define these cases? who shall draw the line beyond which no prayer for mercy to sinners can be heard? the answer is emphatically, *not man, but God* only! In this matter he leaves no responsibility with his praying servants. He does not expect them to say who has and who has not sinned beyond possible mercy—who are and who are not beyond prayer for their salvation. If he wishes us to desist from prayer for any sinner, he will let us know it. He did so to Jeremiah. Until he shall, in some way, make known his will that we pray no longer for a sinner (in a particular case) for his good, it remains our duty to pray. As a rule we must infer that so long as God spares a sinner to live, he spares him to be prayed for, and says to every one of his children, Save this perishing sinner if you can, while you may!

17. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

18. The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

Here the Lord calls the prophet's attention (and that of the people as well) to their ways of idol-worship. Remarkably, persons of all ages and of every class found something to *do* in this worship; thus, by the well known laws of mind, deepening each one's personal interest and giving the system a firmer grasp on the heart and the life of the whole people. Children and fathers, wives and mothers, all participated in the labor done, and all felt the pernicious influence, not of the worship alone, but of all the antecedent preparations and of the surroundings. Verily the hand of Satan was in the plan and the working of this system.——By "the queen of heaven" is probably meant either the moon or the planet Venus.

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The same term occurs 44: 17, 18, 19, 25.——This worship provoked the Lord to anger greatly. Why should it not? The principle involved in it would ruin his entire moral universe. How could he excuse himself from the responsibility of putting it down with a strong hand and with unrelenting justice?

19. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: *do they* not *provoke* themselves to the confusion of their own faces?

No fault can be found with our received translation of this verse. The main difficulty in reaching the sense of the passage lies in the precise point of the antithesis between God and themselves. I take it thus: "Do they call forth my anger? Do they not rather call down on themselves shame and ruin?" That is, let them not suppose that the results of such sin will be simply my anger but no harm to themselves. Nay, verily, but surely their own destruction.——It can not be supposed that their idolatry excited the same holy indignation in their hearts as in God's. This can not be the point of the antithesis. The other above suggested may be. The point of comparison then is, not in the nature of the feelings excited, but in the influence or power of this sin to call forth on the one hand consuming judgments from God; on the other, shame and ruin upon the guilty Jews. The latter they had ignored. God solemnly affirms it.

20. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

God's "anger and fury" thus challenged, thus called forth, respond to the call. They shall be "*poured forth*," *i. e.*, shall fall copiously, widely, upon the whole place and all it contains of men and of their wealth and labor. The devastation would be complete. God's purpose was to make a fearful example of that long-sinning nation. As the righteous moral Ruler of nations, he *must* do it!

21. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

The tone of this verse seems to be, "Add burnt-offerings to sacrifices" in your formal, hypocritical way: go on, since so you will, despite of my warnings against it, and *take the consequences!* It amounts to solemn irony; saying, Make full proof of this madness and folly, if you will, but know ye that the end thereof is death!

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22. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices:

23. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

There can be no doubt that this passage means, I never thought of requiring or of accepting bloody sacrifices *without obedience*. Comparing the one with the other, sacrifices are nothing—obedience is every thing. It never entered my mind to accept such worship as you offer me. Even when I brought your fathers out of Egypt and gave them my statutes by the hand of Moses, I was careful to promise my presence and favor only on condition of obedience, saying, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Ex. 19: 5).——This way of stating the comparative value of things in a strong and perhaps extreme positive form is not without precedent in the Scriptures. Thus the Lord said (Mal. 1: 2, 3), I loved Jacob and I hated Esau," meaning that he loved Jacob far more than Esau. On the very point now before us, the relative value of sacrifice and obedience, the Lord said, by Hosea (6: 6), "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings;" in which passage the latter clause is the more precise statement. So Samuel said to Saul (1 Sam. 15: 22), "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The strong form is put forcibly and admirably by king David in his most penitent hour: "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51: 17). Passages of like import may be seen, Ps. 50: 8–15, and Isa. 1: 11–17.——Great moral lessons lie here: first of all, that the rituals of worship have not the least value before God unless the heart be in them and they really represent a loving and obedient spirit; and next, that religious rites—the ceremonies and forms of worship—must never supersede and supplant essential morality in the sense of love supreme to God, and love impartial and equal toward all fellow-men—the latter evermore implying all the details of the second table of the law. So that when men think to make ritual services their price for an indulgence to sin with impunity, they need not expect, by such means, to bribe the Holy One! Let them know that he abhors their sin, and will be likely, in some decisive way, to show it! If God were to accept such pay for indulgences to sin, it would be unutterably horrible! There need be no fear that he ever will!

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24. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels *and* in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

Of the phrase "walked in the imagination of their evil heart," see notes on 3: 17.——In the last clause, rendered "went backward and not forward," the Hebrew is, "They *were* back-wise and not front-wise," *i. e.*, they gave me the back and not the face. They turned their backs upon me and not their face toward me. This mode of representing their way of treating God is very expressive. ——The same is true of all sinners who still persist in impenitence. They give to God the back and not the face. They seek to *avoid* his eye and his voice; not to gain the one and to hear and heed the other. (See 2: 27.)

25. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them:*

26. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

27. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

28. But thou shalt say unto them, This *is* a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

This standing complaint is often reiterated in these messages of Jeremiah. It is the burden of the Lord's indictment against his apostate people, showing how patiently and how long he had labored to reclaim and save them, and yet how unavailing and how intensely discouraging were all his efforts.——It was eminently in place here and now to reiterate these points, for the case was near its crisis; judgments in their most appalling form were about to break forth upon the nation, so that it was every way befitting that the Lord should vindicate his justice in these terrible visitations, and show also that he had warned them faithfully in love. He meant to show that he could not do otherwise than punish; that their utter moral obduracy compelled him to resort to the sternest judgments; that he had tried persuasion, entreaty, and warning, till manifestly these agencies had utterly lost their power. The people would not hear God's words to any purpose. They had become a nation distinguished for *not* obeying the voice of the Lord their God. This had become their settled character. They would not receive correction and instruction, for the Hebrew word involves

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both ideas, *i. e.*, correction by means of instruction. Hence the Lord was shut up to the painful alternative of trying correction by other means than instruction—even by terrific judgments. So rotten, morally, had they become that truth had perished from their lips; there was no veracity in them; their lips *would* not speak the truth.——It is not clear whether this was intended to include truth-speaking toward their fellow-men. It doubtless refers primarily to their bearing toward God. In regard to him, they had lost all truthfulness. They had violated their solemn covenant with him in every point. He could not depend on one word they might say, touching their relations to him.

29. Cut off thy hair, *O Jerusalem,* and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

Turning suddenly to the doom of ruin so justly deserved and so near, the prophet assumes it already come, and calls on the daughter of Zion to cut off her hair and go into deep mourning.——The word "Jerusalem," in our received translation, is in italics, to indicate that there is no corresponding word in the original. But, since the words of command are in the feminine gender, and the names of cities are usually feminine, there can be no doubt that the city, conceived of as the "daughter of his people," is in his mind.——Long hair was the ornament of the female person. Its being shorn off was a strong expression of grief. Hence it indicates here the great depth of her sorrow.——"High places" were obviously chosen for resort in extreme grief. So 3: 21: "A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplication of the children of Israel;" and 48: 38: "There shall be lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab." The spirit of the command may have been, Make your lamentation as public as possible; let it become national. Go upon the hill-tops and let your wailings reëcho from mountain to mountain till they have rung out their notes of woe over all the land. Why? Because the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. The generation then living was eminently obnoxious to his wrath. His indignation burned against them like fire, and none could quench it. Cause enough for wailing that their own God had utterly rejected and forsaken them, accounting them ripe for his exterminating judgments!

30. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

"Abominations" are as usual idol-altars and whatever belonged to idol-worship. In 2 Kings 21: 4–7, the reader may see that Manasseh did this very thing; "he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which (house) the Lord had said, In Jerusalem will I put

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my name." "He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord."——It is easy to see that this must have been insufferably provoking to the God of Israel, "whose name is holy." Indeed, it would seem to have been intended for an open insult to his majesty.

31. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which *is* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded *them* not, neither came it into my heart.

32. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but, The valley of Slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

This valley of the son of Hinnom lay on the south of Jerusalem. Tophet was a special locality in this valley. Here the Jews built chapels, fanes, or small-sized temples for the worship of Moloch, in honor of whom they burnt their own children in the fire. This murdering of children in idol-worship was most revolting to Jehovah. When he says here that he never commanded it, and it had never come into his heart, we must understand him to mean that he had strictly forbidden it, and that it was most repulsive and abominable to his heart. This sort of figure, which means so much more than by strict construction it would seem to say, is very common. In the present case this sense is demanded by the subject.——And now, to make the form of God's judgment on the nation a perpetual reminder of the sin which it punished, the Lord ordains that the place shall henceforth be one of general slaughter, so that it shall no longer be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but "the valley of Slaughter," and men shall bury in it till there be no more place to bury. This carnage may have occurred specially in connection with the siege and capture of the city by the Chaldeans. Josiah had previously defiled the place to prevent its being used ever again for the murder of children in honor of Moloch. (See 2 Kings 23: 10.) Jewish writers testify that it was made the great receptacle for the filth of the city, and that a fire was kept continually burning there to consume this filth and the worms that forever fed upon it. Hence, the place, with its ever-ascending columns of smoke, its stench, its loathsome associations of crime and of all abominations, became a vivid image of hell—the place of eternal abode and punishment for all the hopeless reprobates of the moral universe of God.——As to the derivation and primary sense of this word Tophet, Gesenius on the whole prefers to take it from an Assyrio-Persian word, meaning "a place of burning"—a place where dead bodies were burned for sepulture. Others derive it from a Hebrew word, meaning *to spit;* and hence this would be a place to be spit on, loathsome, disgusting. But it seems to have

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had this name before it had this character.——Yet others (see Smith's Dictionary of the Bible), following especially the lead of Isa. 30: 32, 33, suppose it closely related to the word for tabret, and understand it to mean, the king's music-grove or garden—a place of resort for such amusements. It is suggested that it may have been used for this purpose as early as the age of Solomon. The earliest reference to Tophet in the Scriptures is by Isaiah (30: 33). The other references are 2 Kings 23: 10, where Josiah defiled it; and in Jeremiah, besides the present passage, are 19: 6, 11–14. Without naming it, Jeremiah refers to it, 31: 40. The last verse of the book of Isaiah, without naming the place either as Tophet or the valley of the son of Hinnom, yet manifestly alludes to it as a place not far from the holy city, to which, from time to time, the people would "go forth and there look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against God; for their worm shall not die, nor shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."——Gehenna in the New Testament is a word transferred from the Greek language, in which it means "*the land of Hinnom.*" It is well known that our Lord used this term for the place of future punishment. Since some suggestive word must be used, none could be found more appropriate and significant. The history of Tophet and Gehenna; the associations that clustered about it; the cruel murder of infants there in honor of Moloch; its doom to be a place of slaughter; the dreadful carnage that came as a just retribution for its horrid infant murders; the depth of its filth; the loathsomeness of its stench; its worms that never died; its fires that were never quenched, and its smoke that never ceased to rise in the distant view from the holy city—all conspired to make this a fearfully truthful image of hell.——Is it not appalling to think how much of horror is grouped under this significant image? If such the figure, what must be the dread reality?——Rev. Horatius Bonar, in Smith's Bible Dictionary, carrying out his idea that Tophet was at first the king's music-garden, says, "The slaughter from which Tophet was to get its new name, was not till after Hezekiah. In all succeeding ages blood has flowed there in streams; corpses, buried and unburied, have filled up the hollows; and it may be that underneath the modern gardens and terraces, there lie not only the debris of the city, but the bones and dust of millions—Romans, Persians, Jews, Greeks, Crusaders, Moslems. What future days and events may bring, it is not for us to say. Perhaps the prophet's words are not yet exhausted.——Strange contrast between Tophet's first and last! Once the choice grove of Jerusalem's choicest valley; then the place of defilement, and death and fire; then the valley of Slaughter! Once the royal music-garden where Solomon's singers, with voice and instrument, regaled the king, the court, and the city; then the temple of Baal, the high place of Moloch, resounding with the cries of burning infants; then (in symbol) the place where is the wailing and gnashing of teeth. Once prepared for Israel's king as one of his

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choicest villas; then degraded and defiled till it becomes the place prepared for "the king," at the sound of whose fall the nations are to shake (Ezek. 31: 16), and as Paradise and Eden passed into Babylon, so Tophet and Ben Hinnom pass into Gehenna and the place of fire. These scenes seem to have taken hold of Milton's mind, for three times over within fifty lines he refers to "the opprobrious hill," "the hill of scandal," the "offensive mountain," and speaks of Solomon making his grove in—

> "The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
> And black Gehenna called, the type of hell."

——The contrast of which this author speaks "between Tophet's first and last," need surprise no one. It comes of the close relation between sinning and suffering—the scenes of daring wickedness and the scenes of its exemplary punishment. There was a like contrast between the first and the last of Sodom. Both Sodom and Tophet are set forth to the eyes of all as "an example of the vengeance of eternal fire!"

33. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray *them* away.

34. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

These verses carry out the fearful curse involved in this doom destined for Tophet. It is plainly indicated that the significance of this new name, "The valley of Slaughter," was to be first verified in the near impending Chaldean war. Then hosts on hosts would lay their dead bodies there to lie unburied.——"Fray them away," means to drive by frightening.——All the usual sounds of joy should utterly cease, and no sounds be heard but those of grief and wailing; and these should ere long subside—to give place to the dead silence of utter desolation!

CHAPTER VIII.

The designation of date—"at that time"—and the general course of thought, combine to show that this chapter is closely connected with chapter 7, a part of the same message. It pursues the same subject, the impending doom coming upon the nation through the agency of the Chaldeans; its causes in the sins of the people; the bitterness and the hopelessness of this doom.

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1. At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:

2. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshiped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

3. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

The obvious meaning of these words is that many (at least) of the kings, princes, priests, prophets and people of Jerusalem should be actually *disinterred*, and not merely left after death, unburied; and that their bones should be exposed under the broad canopy of heaven, to the gaze, so to speak, of the sun, moon and stars—all which heavenly bodies they had so wickedly worshiped while they lived; their judgment being thus so shaped by divine providence as to remind the living perpetually of the great sin for which this judgment came. The sun and moon look down with utter indifference upon the wretched doom of their former worshipers!——The reader of the heathen classics need not be told that the ancients recoiled with extremest horror from the thought of having their bodies lie unburied, to be consumed by the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, or to be "dung upon the face of the earth." Their mythology taught that the unburied could never pass the river Styx into their Elysian fields. The same horror of having their dead bodies exposed above ground seems to have pervaded all the ancient nations, the Jews not excepted. Hence the terror of the doom denounced here. So many bitter woes would be mingled in the cup of these sinners that the survivors would choose death rather than such a life.

4. Moreover, thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

This question seems to mean, Shall the nation fall, and never rise again? Will the people turn away from their God and never return back to him? Nothing is more instinctive and spontaneous than an effort to rise when one is fallen. Shall this nation make no such effort? Or if made, shall it be forever in vain? Will they never return back to the God of their fathers from whom they have so wickedly revolted?

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5. Why *then* is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

This is in the same strain: "Why is this people of Jerusalem slidden back from their God in a backsliding that seems perpetual," that as yet promises no repentance? They seem to have grasped deceit and lies as with the grasp of death that will not relax, and that no friendly hand can sever. They refuse to return to God.

6. I hearkened and heard, *but* they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

The Lord still speaks. After each appeal made to the people by messages sent through his prophets, he listens to catch the words of the people; but alas! none speak well: none of their words inspire hope of their repentance; no man gives his mind to reflection, saying, What have I done? Rather, after each momentary interruption, every man turns back to his course of sin, as the war-horse, roused by the trumpet-blast, rushes furiously to the battle.

7. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

These birds of passage understand when to turn their course and migrate from northern regions to southern, and again back to the northern. They mark the indications of the seasons and adjust their movements accordingly. But my people, saith the Lord, will not understand the laws of my moral kingdom; they will not see that sin brings ruin, and that nothing but substantial turning back to God brings promise of mercy.

8. How do ye say, We *are* wise, and the law of the LORD *is* with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he *it:* the pen of the scribes *is* in vain.

The meaning of the last clause is not made clear in our received translation. The obscurity is mainly due to making two clauses of what should be but one, thus: instead of reading it, "Certainly in vain he made it: the pen of the scribes is in vain;" it should be read, "Lo, certainly the lying pen of the scribes makes it (the law of God) into a lie." Of course these are false scribes, fellow-workers with the false prophets, who made it their business to pervert God's words and to misinterpret his law so that it

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could speak to them only falsehood and never truth. The whole verse expostulates with the people for their self-conceit and self-righteousness: How is it that ye boast of your wisdom and take to yourselves credit for having the law of God in your hands? Alas! that very law your false scribes and teachers pervert to a lie!——The English margin approximates toward the true sense without fully reaching it.

9. The wise *men* are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken; lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom *is* in them?

Those men, so wise in their own esteem, will be confounded when these terrific judgments shall break like a clap of thunder upon their head. They have rejected the word of the Lord, both as it stands in his written law and as it comes through his faithful prophets; "in what, then, have they any real wisdom?" That is having proved themselves fools in these greatest of all matters, in what can they be expected to have any wisdom?

10. Therefore will I give their wives unto others, *and* their fields to them that shall inherit *them:* for every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.

11. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.

12. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

See the same sentiments, and nearly the same words, in chap. 6: 12–15. The repetition of set phrases is one of the features of Jeremiah's style.

13. I will surely consume them, saith the LORD; *there shall be* no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf shall fade; and *the things that* I have given them shall pass away from them.

This means that the Lord will make the desolations of both the people and their land complete. Sword, famine, and captivity will make the ruin perfect.——The last clause I prefer to read, "I will give them those who shall take them away;" literally, "shall cause them to pass away," *i. e.*, into captivity.

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14. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defensed cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

This cry, "Let us go into our strongly-fortified cities," would be the first and the natural impulse produced by an alarm of formidable invasion. (See the same call and cry chap. 4: 5, 6.)—— Instead of, "Let us be silent there," some translate, "Let us perish there;" the language of hopeless despair. Our received translation is better, the sense of the verb sustaining it, and the thought not being that of real despair, but of silent waiting in the bitterness of their perplexity and anguish, as men who know not how much ruin and woe may come, and can only wait and drink in silence the cup of retribution which God, in his justice, is compelled to administer.

15. We looked for peace, but no good *came; and* for a time of health, and behold, trouble!

The people were bitterly disappointed. Their long-continued exemption from severe national calamity, coupled with the delusive promises of their false prophets, had begotten a strange confidence as to their future.——How terribly will this antecedent delusion and its succeeding disappointment be exemplified in the case of myriads of sinners, in that hour when the judgments of God break forth upon them, and there is no remedy!

16. The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones: for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

This is intensely graphic. Suppose it true—that all the way from Dan to Jerusalem the ring of that neighing troop could be heard, thrilling the land with consternation; that under the tramp of their squadrons the whole country trembled as with an earthquake! And then tidings flash through the city—*they come! they come!* They have devoured the country and all it contains: they come upon the city to finish their work of fearful destruction!

17. For behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which *will* not *be* charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

The word rendered "cockatrice" means a basilisk, a viper, a species of serpent, hissing, exceedingly venomous, and formidable beyond any other species known. Upon these serpents there shall

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be no incantation; no arts of men, magic or otherwise, shall be able to charm them aside from their work of death. This is a new figure to denote the fierce and terrible Chaldeans.

18. *When* I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart *is* faint in me.

This verse might well be rendered, "O that some beams of light might break forth upon my grief!" While the general sense of the principal word is that of comfort, consolation, it carries in itself the conception of light breaking forth as an emblem of such comfort. The prophet has a distinct vision of the ruin of his people, and sees no ray of light breaking in upon the utter darkness and fearful gloom of the view.——The second clause, somewhat more independent of the first than our translators make it, reads, "My heart is faint within me."

19. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: *Is* not the LORD in Zion? *is* not her King in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, *and* with strange vanities?

The rendering, "Because of them that dwell in a far country," assumes that those distant dwellers are their Chaldean foes. The original words will scarcely bear this construction. They should rather be read, "Lo, the voice of an outcry of the daughter of my people, herself now in a far distant country;" yet more literally, "Lo, the voice of an outcry of my people from a land afar." The Jews are seen in their captivity far away, raising the question, "Is there no Jehovah in Zion?" "Is not her own King there," to rescue and to save? They profess to think it marvelous that God does not take care of his own city, temple, and people.—— To this assumed state of their mind the Lord himself responds: If ye regard me as your God and Savior, why have ye provoked me to anger with your graven images and with your foreign idols that are only a breath, mere emptiness and vanity? How can you complain of me for neglecting to save Jerusalem when she has done her utmost to repel me away and provoke me to exterminating vengeance upon her?

20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

These are proverbial expressions, and very plain in their significance. They speak of golden opportunities forever lost; of salvation long within their easy grasp, yet utterly neglected; till at length ruin comes and salvation is no longer possible. The harvest-time is past, and no supplies for winter can now be gathered. The summer is ended; nothing to purpose is done, and

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dread winter knows no mercy. So those Jews in their distant wanderings look back to the days of peace in their native land when they might have repented; might have found mercy; might have secured the richest salvation; but those days of grace have gone by to return no more, and there remains only the sad wail, "we are not saved!"——The glorious and righteous God is forever the same. His moral government over the Jews of Jeremiah's time was but an illustration of his moral government over every sinner this day. Opportunities for salvation come before remediless damnation. The summer and the harvest come before the inexorable rigor and the stern wants of a cold and barren winter. But as God lets the laws of nature take their course and bring winter on in its resistless march whether the sluggard gathers in harvest or gathers not; so in his moral kingdom Time rolls us on toward Eternity; Retribution stays not for the folly of the self-hardened sinner, but rather seems to hurry him on the more relentlessly to his appalling, inexorable doom! O, will there not be bitter and unavailing regrets in that world of the lost! Can there be one ingredient in their cup of woe more bitter than this, that their summer and their harvest came and went, and they were not saved? The sweet tones of Mercy's voice fell gently on their ear, but fell unheeded! Love wept over their folly; fell at their feet imploring them to be wise—but Love wept and implored only in vain!——And now they are not only doomed, but damned. "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not." Ye knew the day of mercy, but gave it up to folly, and now must reap what ye have sown.

"When the rich gales of mercy no longer shall blow—
The gospel no message declare;
Sinner, how canst thou bear the deep wailings of woe—
How suffer the night of despair?"

21. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

The word rendered "hurt" means "the crushing down." Because the daughter of my people is crushed, so too am I. So intense are my sympathies, I feel every pang that tortures her heart. Is she broken to pieces? So am I.——The middle clause, better, "I am a mourner." Indeed, the original means rather, to go about in dirty, squalid garments as mourners were wont to do, than to be "black."——Astonishment, amazement, has *seized* fast hold upon me, is the strong sense of the last verb.

22. *Is there* no balm in Gilead? *is there* no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

The balsam of Gilead was celebrated for its medicinal virtues in healing wounds. The last clause rendered literally would be, "Why then is not the bandage of the daughter of my people re-

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moved? Why is not the cure already complete and the bandage dismissed?——The sense of these figures is plain; there is a remedy, there has certainly been a time for applying a sovereign remedy to all these ills of my people. Why has it not been provided? Why have not this people returned early to their God and sought his forgiveness with all their hearts?——In a moral point of view, it was of the utmost consequence that this great idea of timely repentance as the alternative of remediless ruin should be kept in the focal blaze of light before their eyes. They ought to know that the last sands of mercy's hours are fast running out!

CHAPTER IX.

The connection of thought continues through this chapter unbroken. Hence, we can have no doubt as to its date and occasion. It is part of the same message as the two preceding chapters.

1. Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

2. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they *be* all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

This beautiful and touching utterance of grief has been justly admired by all who know how to appreciate the sensibilities of a benevolent heart. To estimate its fitness and force, we need to consider carefully the circumstances that called it forth. Think what he has been saying, and also what he goes on to say. His prophetic eye sees his own beloved country laid desolate; a fierce and bloody foe comes in upon the land from the north; the neighing of his horses is heard from Dan; they sweep over the land, leaving it a waste of ruin—as if troops of serpents and vipers were let loose upon them, whom no magic skill could charm. He hears the wail of Zion's sons and daughters coming up from their desolate wanderings in a strange land. They would fain ask, Why are we thus spoiled? Why does not Jehovah take care of his own city and temple? The answer comes: Why have they provoked me unto such judgments with their idols and their incorrigible wickedness? Alas! he hears them bewailing their wasted opportunities, and mourning that their day of hope and mercy is past forever!——These are the things that oppress his heart so heavily. The fearful crisis is not yet past. These calamities have not already fallen (save only in

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small part) upon the nation, but they are close at hand, and sure to come unless the people can be aroused to see their guilt, to turn from their sins, and to cry for mercy.——Ah, who can measure the interests at stake and pending on the question whether this nation shall be saved or lost? With what agonizing solicitude the prophet thinks of it! How does his heart palpitate and every nerve quiver with sensibility! O, if the people would only hear and believe and repent! But *will* they? What are the prospects?——Mark how his mind turns to the moral state of the people as we proceed with this chapter. They are so deeply and so horribly corrupt, so adulterous, so treacherous, so utterly false and untruthful, so surely moving on from evil to evil, from awful sin to more awful sinning! Where is a man who can be trusted? Where is a friend or a brother who will not deceive and betray his best friend?——And now, is it strange that a godly man, of tender, loving heart, should cry out, "O that I could weep! O for the relief of tears! O for something to assuage the anguish of my heart!" No wonder he should feel that here is cause for tears—cause not for a single tear or two—not for one transient gush, but for a perpetual stream—for tears that will forever flow! If his head were only waters and his eyes a living fountain, never more to become dry, how would he then weep day and night over the ruin of the daughter of his people! Alas, that with such a salvation possible, the people have no heart to meet its only and just conditions! Alas, that their corruption is too deep, their wicked heart too hard to care for their sins—too proud to think of confession, repentance, and pleading for mercy! ——The presence of so much horrible sin is sickening, and his eye unconsciously turns for relief to flight. If he only had—far out on the dreary desert—a lodging-place for travelers, that he might leave his people and find rest in the depths of such a solitude, for how can he endure these sights and sounds of sin? How can he bear this perpetual strain upon the sensibilities of his torn and bleeding heart?——Observe, Jeremiah does not give way to misanthropy. He does not say, Let me hate these mean, detestable men, and let it be my joy to curse them! Nor does he harden his heart against sorrow, saying, Why should I vex myself over evils which I have toiled in vain to cure?

Nor does he devoutly dissociate himself from his people, and turning his whole view toward heaven, exult in the blessedness reserved for the holy there, and say, Let it be enough for me that heaven and glory are mine, though my bleeding country perish and the Zion of my God goes down to ruin. No; none of these modes of thought and feeling could he permit; but in the spirit of him who wept over Jerusalem in her next great and similar hour of perilous crisis, he would not spare his tears. It was his luxury to weep!——It often happens that faithful ministers of Christ, set to watch for souls, are brought into circumstances very similar to those of Jeremiah. They have under their eye sinners, just on the verge of eternal ruin, whose last hours of hope may

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be passing forever away, but whose hearts are hard and proud and apparently proof against every sort of appeal looking toward repentance unto salvation. There are some godly pastors who lay such cases deeply upon their heart, and weep in secret places over those whom their best endeavors fail to reclaim; but *how many* such are to be found? How many come up to the standard of benevolent sympathy which is before us here in the example of this faithful prophet?

3. And they bend their tongues *like* their bow *for* lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

4. Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanders.

5. And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity.

This description of popular sin is truly appalling. As the warrior treads his bow, bending it with foot as well as hand to fit it for a shot, so they bend their tongue as a bow to shoot lies. They are not mighty for the truth in the land. No man can trust his dearest friend, so utterly lost is their sense of honor and fidelity. To "walk with slanders" means to go about tale-bearing falsely. ——"Weary themselves" is to exhaust their strength in devising and in executing schemes of wickedness. This is their business, their profession; and they drive it even to weariness.

6. Thy habitation *is* in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

The Lord addresses his prophet: "It is thy mission to dwell in the midst of this deceit." It is through the intrinsic deceitfulness of their hearts, their love of it and passion for it, that they refuse to know me. That they live, not knowing God, is by no means their misfortune or their fate; it is truly and simply their fault and their crime. They choose to have it so. They *might* know the Lord, but they *will* not.

7. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?

To "melt and try"—figures taken from the refining of metals by fire—look toward the stern discipline of calamity. "How else could I do for the daughter of my people?" Their case baffles

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and sets at naught all the milder modes of treatment. Nothing can save them but this terrible process of refining by the fires of affliction.

8. Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: *one* speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

"An arrow shot out" is, in the Hebrew, a murderous arrow—death-bearing. This is most consummate treachery—to talk as if in peace and friendship, while in his heart he plots only ruin.

9. Shall I not visit them for these *things?* saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

These words have occurred above (5: 9, 29). They are the outburst of that holy indignation which God must feel against such horrible sinning. It was every way befitting that the people should hear these words, and become aware of the indignation that burned against them in the bosom of their God for their great sins.

10. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through *them;* neither can *men* hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.

Obviously this verse is interposed by the prophet—perhaps we might say, interrupting the divine speaker—at least it is interjected here between words spoken by the Lord both before and after.—— The prophet's mind is full of this matter of mourning and bewailing the sin and ruin of his people. So utter was this desolation that even the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field were all gone. What a solitude that must have left!

11. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, *and* a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

The Lord speaks again: "I will even make Jerusalem (though it has been the place of my temple) heaps of desolation," etc.

12. Who *is* the wise man, that may understand this? and *who is he* to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth *and* is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

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Again the minds of the people are turned to the moral causes of this great ruin. A call is made for wise men, sufficiently intelligent in the ways of God toward men to give the reasons why; or for some prophet to whom the Lord has revealed it, and who will proclaim it to the people, that they may know why the land is so utterly ruined that no traveler will pass through it; not merely that no man will reside there, but that no solitary traveler will make his way through it.

13. And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;

14. But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

The Lord himself answers again, to meet this point with reiterated testimony. It is wholly and only because of their great sin in discarding the authority of God, in refusing to give heed to his commands, in scorning and setting at naught his law and going in the way of their own rebellious heart, and after Baalim, as taught them by their wicked fathers.

15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

16. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.

(See 8: 14.) God will give them a thoroughly bitter portion—a lot intensely afflictive and loathsome. This is tersely indicated by the bitterest things known, upon which they were to be fed, and which they must drink. Some of them were to be taken captives to a land before unknown; others must fall by the sword. Precisely these judgments had been threatened long before for these sins. (See Lev. 26: 33, and Deut. 28: 64.) Another prediction of this captivity, yet more full, may be seen Jer. 25: 9–11.

17. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning *women*, that they may come:

18. And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

"*The* mourning women" were a professional class in the East, including Judea. They were paid for their attendance on occasions of public mourning to sing funeral dirges and play on a spe-

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cies of pipe or flute (tibia). Jerome, in the fourth century, long resident in Palestine, says in his commentary on this passage: "On account of the approaching captivity and destruction of Jerusalem, he directs that the mourning women be called, who, on occasions of sorrow, were accustomed to excite the people to tears with their mournful wails, at the same time beating their arms with their hands. For this custom continues in our day. Women with disheveled hair and naked breasts move all to tears by the nice modulations of their voice."——The ancient Romans had the same professional class to help in cases of public mourning.——They are said to be "cunning," not in the trickish sense, but in the sense of being *skilled* by art and practice in this service. On funeral occasions, it was their custom to extemporize plaintive songs, elegies, extolling the virtues of the departed. In the present case, they would have to bewail the utter ruin of their city, temple, and nation.——The divine purpose, in this call for the mourning women, was to make the stronger impression of the reality of their impending calamity. We must bear in mind that the mass of the people were persistently skeptical. They would not believe their nation was doomed to ruin.

19. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast *us* out.

The prophet sees these mourners just at the point when they are thrust out from their loved homes. Hence their voice of wailing is heard coming forth from Zion.

20. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbor lamentation.

The Lord accosts these mourning women. There will be so much occasion for such service as theirs that he exhorts them all to teach their daughters, and every one her female neighbor or friend, and thus train the entire female population for professional mourners. What an impression such a message from God ought to have made on the heart of the nation—and would have made if they had only believed God!

21. For death is come up into our windows, *and* is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, *and* the young men from the streets.

There is sad cause for universal wailing, for death is coming up into their windows—the walls of their houses and even of their goodly palaces being no protection. Death comes, despite of house

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or palace walls, despite of bars and bolts; it comes to cut off the children so that none shall appear again abroad and no young men shall be seen any more in their streets.——Some suppose that this form of death was the pestilence; but nothing forbids the more natural supposition that it refers to the Chaldean soldiers, the well-known agents in this great destruction.

22. Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvest-man, and none shall gather *them*.

Still addressing the mourning women, the Lord directs them to say in their mourning elegies, to be sung at once in the ears of the people, that men's bodies shall fall and lie unburied as dung in the open field; and that as the grain is felled by the reaper and left ungathered behind him, so shall there be none to gather and bury their fallen dead!

23. Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches:

24. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

These impressive words—good for all time and for all people—must of course be considered here in their special reference to the events before the mind—the fearful ruin then impending over the city and nation of the Jews. In view of such perils, in an exigency so fearful, let not the wise statesman glory in his wisdom, as if his skill in diplomacy or his far-sighted policy could save the nation. Let not the mighty chieftain glory in his military science, nor in the prowess and valor of his warriors. Let not the rich man glory in his riches; for what can gold avail toward the salvation of his country in this hour of her peril? but let him who would glory at all glory in this alone, that he understandeth and knoweth God, and of course that he adjusts himself to this knowledge of God as one who exercises loving-kindness indeed, but also judgment and righteousness in all the earth; for these qualities of his character are dear to God, and he will surely reign in harmony with them, and will give them absolute sway in his moral government over nations and over men. Hence, if they would penitently seek his favor, they might rely on his loving-kindness; otherwise they must expect naked judgment and righteousness, for the time had come to visit judgment on all the incorrigibly wicked.——It was the ruin of the Jews of that age that they had reckoned without God. Their plans and hopes had left out the Almighty, and made no account of his great attributes of lov-

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ing-kindness, justice, and righteousness. They had trusted in their own wisdom, might, and riches, and had made these their glory. Hence nothing could be said to them more appropriate than what is said here, warning them against glorying in themselves, and admonishing them that the only valid foundation for glorying lay in adjusting their spirit and life to the character and government of the great Jehovah with whom they had every thing to do.——Does the reader need to be reminded that the same great God is also *our* God; that the same government of loving-kindness and yet of judgment and righteousness bears absolute sway over *us* also, as truly as over the Jews of old; and hence that it is as true of every one of us as ever of them that it is infinite folly to glory in our wisdom, might, or wealth; and truly wise to glory only in understanding and knowing this ever-blessed God, with whom we too have every thing to do, in whose hand are all our destinies?

25. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all *them which are* circumcised with the uncircumcised;

26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all *these* nations *are* uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart.

The fearful sweep of Chaldean invasion and conquest which ruined Judea and Jerusalem, was destined also to overthrow the adjacent nations as well. This is predicted here. A more full prediction of the same great fact appears in chap. 25: 15–25. ——"Days come," means that the events are near at hand. "I will visit" (so the original) "upon all the circumcised" yet in their uncleanness, *i. e.*, who are circumcised in the flesh only, and not in the heart. This applied both to Jews still in their pollutions and to other nations also.——It is noticeable that here, as also in chap. 25: 19, Egypt comes first of the uncircumcised nations. Her influence had led the rest into opposition to the Chaldeans; now she is first named in the prediction of judgments. ——The phrase rendered "all that are in the utmost corners," should rather be read as in the margin, "those who round off the corners of their beard;" literally, "shorn as to the corners"—a somewhat contemptuous appellation given to the Arabs of the desert. It would seem that they alone of all the nations of the East shaved their beards at all, and they only the corners.

All the house of Israel were so entirely uncircumcised in heart that they might well take their doom with the uncircumcised Gentiles.——This must have been humilitating to the self-righteous, bigoted Jews. Yet it was sadly, fearfully true, and the time was coming which must develop that truth in its practical bearings and fearful results. They must take their doom among the pol-

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luted, unclean nations of their immediate neighborhood, those nations whose idol-gods they had imported, and in whose ruin they must now share.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter is manifestly not connected with the preceding, and appears to be distinct from the following one. Maurer makes two parts of it; the first comprising vs. 1–16; the second vs. 17–25. He supposes the first to have been occasioned by the appearance of some extraordinary portents in the heavens; *e. g.*, eclipses, falling stars, meteors, or comets. The latter he dates in the reign of Jehoiakim.——His date of the latter portion I accept as the best sustained theory, but I am by no means clear that the chapter needs to be divided into two parts of distinct date. The allusion to portents in the heavens is brief (v. 2), and is very closely connected with the system of idol-making and idol-worship which forms the basis of the passage vs. 2–16. The reason for this allusion to portents may lie in the fact that those ancient systems of idolatry were built upon the doctrine that these heavenly bodies ruled the destinies of men. Hence, those systems found their ostensible support mainly in those extraordinary portents. There was no other visible proof that men have any thing to fear from the power or the wrath of the heavenly bodies, except what appeared in eclipses, dark days, shooting stars, and meteoric phenomena. Hence, those phenomena filled the ancient world with intense alarm and even horror, and laid the foundation for great systems of reverential worship of the sun, moon, planets, and stars. The close connection indicated here between v. 2 and vs. 3–16, certainly favors the view that portents in the heavens are referred to here only because they are so fundamentally connected with the ancient systems of idolatry. In this view we need not suppose this passage to have been occasioned by the occurrence of any extraordinary portents at that time. It may or may not have been. There is ample reason for the allusion to portents, apart from the supposition of their recent occurrence.——This message seems to have been sent in anticipation of the residence of the people among idolaters in their captivity. There they would come into the closest contact with the whole system. Hence the propriety of exposing it to their view as ineffably foolish, false, and baseless—as is done here.

1. Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:
2. Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the

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heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

"Learn not," etc., warns them not to be inquisitive about the deep things of that system, not to practice those rites, not to come within the magic charm which it might have over some minds, but to keep themselves entirely aloof. Moreover, be not afraid of extraordinary portents, or of any unusual appearances in the heavens, *e. g.*, eclipses, comets, meteoric phenomena, etc. There is nothing in them that you need to fear. Be not moved by sympathy to fear them because the heathen do. Or, more probably the logical connection ("*for* the heathen are dismayed at them") is this. The fact that the heathen are dismayed by these portents, so far from being a reason why you should be, is precisely the reason why you should *not* be. Even as our Lord (Matt. 6: 32) exhorts his disciples not to be anxious for earthly good things, giving as one reason, "*for* after all these things do the Gentiles seek," their course being precisely what you should *not* imitate, since they have no Father in heaven to trust in, and you have.——Let us pause here to note that the doctrine of this verse ought to expel from all Christian lands and utterly explode a host of senseless, ridiculous superstitions, *e. g.*, about unlucky days, bad Fridays, evil omens, spilling salt, seeing the new moon over the left, and a troop of like notions too silly to be named. Let it be enough that the heathen are afraid of such things. What have we to do with those ridiculous, atheistic superstitions if we believe the universe to be ruled by the one all-wise God? If we recognize, adore, and love him as our own great Father; if we believe that his providence reaches every falling sparrow and counts every hair of the head, why should we be afraid as if some Malign Power had the control of each Friday, purposed to blast every enterprise begun on his day? Away with such atheism and such unutterable nonsense!

3. For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax:

4. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

5. They *are* upright as the palm-tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they can not go. Be not afraid of them; for they can not do evil, neither also *is it* in them to do good.

The word rendered "customs," is somewhat more fundamental than a merely external act, or even an established usage. It reaches the fixed opinions, notions, doctrines of the popular mind. Hence this passage affirms that in the case of the heathen these are radically false, a mere breath, a vanity. "The people" are

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here the heathen, as in v. 2. The proof of the falsehood and vanity of their notions is seen in what they do in their manufacture of idol-gods to worship. There is no method so effective, none which the sacred writers so often adopt, to show the utter folly of faith in images and idols as to state with considerable detail *how they are made*, and hence show what they really are. (See this done by Isaiah, chap. 40: 19, 20; and 41: 6, 7; and 44: 9–20; also in Psalms, 115: 4–8.) Here they begin with cutting a tree out of the forest with the ax. All that it is now more or other than a tree, the hands of the workman have made it. Then another set of workmen take it in hand; they deck it with silver and with gold; but this puts no attributes of the real God into it. They are obliged to fasten it with nails and hammers, so that it can not move; else it could not even stand alone. Now they are "turned work" (Heb.), smooth and straight as the palm-tree, but they speak not; none of them ever yet opened his mouth to utter a word. They must needs be borne by other hands, for they can not walk. Be not afraid of such senseless, motionless, powerless things! They can do you no hurt, nor is it in them to do any good. Impotent alike to curse or to bless, it is simple folly to fear them, and, of course, unutterable folly to revere and worship them as if they were God!

6. Forasmuch as *there is* none like unto thee, O LORD; thou *art* great, and thy name *is* great in might.

The word "*forasmuch*" seems not to be justified by the original, which simply makes the strongest form of negation, "There is absolutely none like unto thee, O Jehovah;" there is none else that even approximates toward thee in glory, greatness, majesty; in all the qualities of thy divine nature.——"Thy name," etc., where the *name* of God (as often elsewhere) represents his essential nature and qualities of character.

7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise *men* of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, *there is* none like unto thee.

"To thee doth it appertain," means that such fear and reverence *befit* the Almighty God—are becoming and demanded of all intelligent beings by his very nature.——The last clause seems to refer to the fact that some of the lesser gods of the heathen are only deified heroes, great men lifted up, after death, to the rank of demi-gods. None of these can at all compare with the great and only God.

8. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock *is* a doctrine of vanities.

The original word for "altogether," I take to mean, not *utterly*,

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wholly, but rather *all as one*, all *equally* brutish. You can affirm it of them *all*, without exception.——While the general sense of the last clause is clear, its precise meaning is somewhat in doubt. The word rendered "stock," is simply wood, or, as in v. 3, "tree." The word rendered "doctrine" may mean *instruction*, things taught and notions held, *i. e.*, about those vanities, idols; or it may mean the *refutation* of those vanities. In the former view, the specific sense would be that the whole system of notions held about those idols is mere *wood*, senseless as a stick or a block. In the latter, this: The refutation of those vain notions is *in* that stick. The fact that it is nothing more than a block of wood should forever refute the nonsense of those who believe in and worship such things as gods. The former is the sense of our received version; the latter comes more closely to the sense of the main Hebrew word rendered "doctrine."

9. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple *is* their clothing: they *are* all the work of cunning *men*.

The prophet returns to the method of refuting the whole system of idolatry by giving the history of the manufacture of their gods. ——From Tarshish (Tartessus in Spain) they brought silver beaten out into thin plates for overlaying their wooden gods. Gold, in like manner, came from Uphaz, another name for Ophir, and which lay on the southern shore of Asia, but whether in Arabia or India is still not fully determined.——To disprove most conclusively the presence of any god in it yet, the prophet is careful to say that thus far all this is only the product of the workmen's hands, and such hands never could *make God*—never could introduce a god into that stick of wood—could do it none the better for its being overlaid with silver and gold. They also deck it with cloths of the finest varieties of purple. The Hebrew words used here denote the blue or cerulean purple, and the reddish purple, each color obtained from its own variety of shell-fish.

10. But the LORD *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an everlasting King: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

All unlike those senseless images is *Jehovah of Hosts*. He alone is "the true God," and no false pretension; "the living God," and not a dead, unconscious idol; everlasting, and not made but yesterday by the cunning skill of human artists. The effects of his power evince his greatness and majesty. When he is wroth, the people of the earth are made to tremble. They feel the terrible inflictions of his hand, and they can not abide his indignation.—— In this connection, it seems better to take the word "earth" in

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the sense of its population, affrighted by his judgments, rather than of its material mass, shaken physically by an earthquake.

11. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, *even* they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

This verse supposes the Jews addressed to be present among the heathen, probably in the land of their captivity in Chaldea. The verse itself is in the Chaldean language, thus giving the Jews the very words they should say to the idolatrous heathen among whom they were living.——The verse is a model of wisdom and force. At first view it may seem to be very moderate in its form of expression, with much less strength than the case would admit. For it does not say, Those gods must perish that are nothing but wood, plated over with silver and gold, and clad in purple. But, assuming what not a man in all the heathen world could deny, viz., that those gods *did not make* the earth and the heavens, it declares, "Those gods which are not the makers of the earth and the heavens *shall perish* from the earth and from under these heavens." Nothing could be more palpable than the fact that those gods that were themselves made by human hands can not be the one great God that made the earth and the heavens. In the argument the underlying truth is that *creatorship is the only proof of divinity* that is every-where ostensible and for evermore reliable. He, and only he, who made all things is God. When you have settled the question, Who is God? you have settled it that all false gods, mere pretenders, arrayed of course in opposition to the true God, must perish. He can not bear a rival to his claims and never ought to, for the responsibility of ruling his own universe rests upon him, and he can not throw it off if he would and would not if he could. All pretended gods, therefore, must perish.——The great force of this verse lies in its being entirely free from any thing offensive, and in its assuming nothing but what is essentially self-evident, at least so palpable and clear that no mind can rationally, soberly, call it in question.

12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

In these varied forms the prophet affirms that the power and wisdom of Jehovah were the efficient cause in the creation of the universe, the earth, and the heavenly bodies.——In the middle clause, the Hebrew word rendered "world," usually means the inhabited world, the world considered as peopled. In this view of the world, most wonderful displays of divine wisdom appear on every hand.——It would be simply absurd to affirm such effects of the agency or of the attributes of the heathen gods. How vast

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the contrast between the mere vanities, the nothings, which the heathen worship, and the great, all-glorious God!

13. When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

The word for "voice" might be construed as being the divine permission or behest, or as being thunder. The latter sense of the word is common in such a connection as this. (See Ps. 29.) Either way the sense is good, and in general much the same. The thought throughout the passage is sublimely grand. Jehovah's hand is in all those wonderful changes which take place in the waters of our world, now gathered in the atmosphere above us as in a vast store-house; then descending in rain to feed the springs and water the fields; then flowing away to fill the great lakes, gulfs, seas, and oceans; then ascending in vapors to complete the circuit of incessant and forever beneficent change.——Note also that other fine conception which assigns store-houses for the winds, out of which Jehovah calls them at his will to fulfill their mission. (See the same words in Ps. 135: 7.) The finest classic poets of ancient Greece and Rome had also their prison-house for the winds; but alas! they failed to reach the sublime idea that the one great Maker and Ruler of all both made and manages all these things.

14. Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them.

"Every man" must be parallel and coextensive with "every founder"—the thought being upon idolaters only. The first clause, if it stood by itself, might be read, "Every man" (idolater) "is too brutish to know," *i. e.*, to know God; too near the mental condition of the brute to recognize and know God in his works. But the obvious parallelism between the first clause and the second sustains, if indeed it does not demand, this construction, viz., all those idolaters are shown to be brutish by their artistic skill and by their works of art—corresponding in the structure of the sentence with—"Every founder is put to shame by his graven image." The sense in both clauses being this: The fact of their making their own gods with human fingers by human skill proves them to be brutish in moral intelligence. If they had human sense in use, they could not do it.——There is force in the apparent solecism, "Shown to be brutish by his knowledge." The man who knows enough (in the arts) to manufacture a god, and yet does not know enough in his moral nature to discard this manufactured god, proves himself brutish. The same idea appears

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above vs. 3–5, 8, 9.——"His molten image is a lie"—a lie *in act*—utterly unlike what it is claimed and supposed to be. "There is no breath" might be rendered, no spirit, no intelligent mind in them. But to deny to them breath and life includes this as the greater includes the less, as existence must precede intelligence.

15. They *are* vanity, *and* the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

"The work of errors," *i. e.*, of delusions, things gotten up to deceive the people into the false notion that they are gods, and can affect human happiness and destiny. In the time when God shall visit their worshipers with condign punishment, they too shall utterly perish. The system itself must fall with the utter fall of those who made and held it.

16. The Portion of Jacob *is* not like them: for he *is* the former of all *things;* and Israel *is* the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts *is* his name.

All unlike those empty nothings is the great Jehovah, whom Jacob and Israel may recognize as their portion in the sense of their treasure and their preëminent glory, their own infinite Father and God. For he is the Maker and Framer of all things—the original word here used assuming indeed his creatorship, but specially affirming that he *constructs* all things, plans and frames and perpetually works all in all.——"Israel is the *rod*," in the sense of tribe or people, whom he inherits and claims as his own. The original word means primarily a shoot or twig; then a rod or stick; but comes to mean also all the scions (sons) of a family, and hence, the tribes of Israel; and here the whole cluster of those tribes as one. It was the glory of Israel to be possessed, claimed, and regarded by Jehovah as his own peculiar people. It would be every thing toward the great object aimed at in these messages by Jeremiah if he could impress the people with these ideas, and thus show them the preëminent privileges and destinies open to the Hebrew race; the preëminent greatness and glory of the God they might have as their own portion, and so, the infinite folly of going after idols.

17. Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress.

18. For thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find *it so.*

However we may account for it, the subject does change here very suddenly. The date of this subsequent part as a message from God may be the same with that of the first sixteen verses,

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the connection of thought being this: Now that I have set before you the folly of idol-worship, and thus guarded you against its seductive influences, it remains to assure you that you are destined to be driven speedily from your land into captivity, and subjected there to these very temptations.——"Gather thy *wares*," means not specially bales of merchandise, but baggage generally, every thing packed and bound up for transportation.——Even those who lived in fortified cities, *the* strongholds of the land, must prepare to flee, for they must go full soon, even thrust out altogether, and violently, as a stone hurled from a sling. The form of this expression, "this once," is thought to favor the opinion that this was the first deportation of captives in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. I can not regard it as decisive to this point.——God will distress them till they shall *feel* it. To the end that they may feel it, is the sense of the original. God meant this chastisement should reach the sensibilities of that guilty and hardened people.

19. Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this *is* a grief, and I must bear it.

Were it not that the next verse must be applied to the Jewish people, thought and spoken of as one, we should naturally refer this verse to the prophet himself. But the scope of v. 20 must determine the construction of this verse. Hence this represents the people as bewailing the crushing blow that falls on them. The Hebrew word for "hurt," means properly a blow that crushes. The next clause repeats, "My smiting is most *severe*," the word having often the sense of *deadly*, a death wound. But the people only say, This is our inevitable destiny; we will bear it.——This language does not necessarily involve submission to God in the sense of Christian resignation. It may be only the philosophic forced yielding that comes from a consciously unavoidable necessity. It seems here to represent a spirit, not softened and yielding, but hard, sour, and stubborn.

20. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they *are* not: *there is* none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.

In this beautiful figure, the people say, "My tent is ruined; my tent-cords are broken; my children are no more; I have none left to help me set up my tent again." Alas! her sons and daughters are either slain or gone into captivity, and her homes are all desolate!

21. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

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The reason why this great calamity comes on the people, its antecedent causes, must be continually kept in mind; hence they appear again here. The religious teachers of the people had become utterly brutish, in the same sense in which idolaters had been shown to be brutish (v. 8, 14). They had gone into idolatry, and led the people after them. They should have sought the Lord, but they did not. On their souls must rest the fearful guilt of ruining the nation!

22. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, *and* a den of dragons.

The almost obsolete noun, "bruit," means the rumor, the tidings. Its sound—lo, it comes! a great crash from the land of the north, the Chaldean irruption, breaking into their country to lay it desolate.

23. O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

The usage of the first person in v. 19, 20, and also in v. 24, concur in sustaining the construction which applies this verse to the Jewish people. The prophet speaks for them, and in their behalf. "O Lord, I know that man's way is not *to himself*," in the sense of being under his absolute control. Thy hand is everywhere and evermore supreme, shaping all destinies and even all the lesser subordinate acts and ways of mortals. This recognition of God's universal agency introduces a prayer that God would shape the issues of their destined captivity in his merciful providence. The people express their sense of conscious weakness, and cast themselves on the supreme agency and control of God. ——Probably this language is put into the mouth of the people by the prophet as adapted to meet their case, rather than as truly expressing their actual thought and prayer at this time.

24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

25. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

The prayer here is, first, that God would deal gently, tenderly with the people, that their ruin might not be utter and perpetual; and, secondly, that, upon the heathen who had rendered him no worship, he would send his judgments more heavily and fearfully, because they had consumed Jacob, and led the people of the Lord away into a long and grievous captivity.——In due time the Lord answered this prayer by his judgments on Babylon.——This passage is sometimes quoted as if it referred to family prayer. Such

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reference should be understood as merely by way of accommodation. The sense here takes a much broader range, even to those heathen tribes and clans that do not worship or even know the true God.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter and the next are closely connected, the persecution of the prophet by his fellow-townsmen and relatives of Anathoth constituting a connecting bond. (Compare 11: 19–23 with 12: 6.) ——This message appears without any date; but the points made in it, especially the conspiracy found in Judah and Jerusalem to apostatize from God, and the violent efforts upon the prophet's life, show that it must have been later than Josiah's reign, and, in all probability, soon after Jehoiakim's accession to the throne. Persecution against the prophet became virulent during this king's reign. (See chap. 26, and also 36.)

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
2. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
3. And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed *be* the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,
4. Which I commanded your fathers in the day *that* I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:
5. That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as *it is* this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD.

Assuming the time of this message to be soon after the death of Josiah, in the first years of Jehoiakim, the manifest symptoms of apostasy arrested attention, and the Lord, through his prophet, sent this solemn warning to stay its development and further progress if possible. Most appropriately he calls their attention to that great covenant made between himself and the Hebrew nation soon after they came forth from Egypt, brought to view first in Ex. 19 and 20, and drawn out yet more fully in all its conditions, its curses and its blessings, in Deut. 27–30. There especially they might see the fearful catalogue of curses denounced

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upon the people if they should rebel against their God and prove faithless to their solemn vows in this covenant.——The prophet's answer at the close of v. 5, "Amen, Lord," *i. e.*, so let it be, may be supposed to be in general his cordial assent to that covenant, including specially his prayer that the grant of Canaan might be made perpetual by the fidelity of the people; also his admission, in harmony with the spirit of Deut. 27: 14–26, that the curses imprecated would fall justly on the people if they proved faithless; and not improbably his consent to deliver the message as required: "All right, Lord; I go." This emphatic *amen* seems to include his hearty assent and consent upon all these points.

6. Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.

7. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day *that* I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice.

"Protesting" is a solemn form of attestation. The Hebrew word is used for witnessing, giving or taking testimony under solemn sanctions. So the Lord had announced to the people the terms of this covenant often and in methods of the greatest solemnity, all along from the day they came out of Egypt unto the time then present.——The expression "rising early," is specially significant, and in our prophet quite frequent. (See 7: 13, and 25: 3, 4, and 35: 15.) The command, "Proclaim these words, not only in the streets of Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah," indicates the wide range of his mission and the solemn earnestness of this attempted reform.

8. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded *them* to do; but they did *them* not.

"Walking in the imagination of their evil heart" stands opposed to walking obediently with God. See the explanation of this phrase in notes on 3: 17.——The last clause means, I will execute all the curses threatened in this covenant on those who violate it. (See these penalties in Deut. 27.)

9. And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

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10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

A "conspiracy" is a concerted plan for mischief; in this case the mischief of turning away from the worship of God to the worship of idols; from obeying God to following altogether the impulses of their own wicked hearts. The term is often used in the political sense of treason against the throne—a sense pertinent here because Jehovah was their king.——It would seem that these developments appeared immediately after the death of Josiah. Jehoiakim began his reign wickedly.

11. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.

This evil, the Chaldean army, would be one from which they could not escape; in the precise sense of the original, could not "go forth from under it." It would be all in vain for them in the hour of their distress to cry to God for help. He forestalled such cries by assuring them he should not hear!—a fact which has a terrible significance to every sinner who has incurred the wrath of God, and for whom no help is possible, save in God's mercy, and yet with whom no cries for mercy can be availing! But the sinner is moving on fast to the hour of retribution! What shall he do?

12. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble.

It will be only a righteous retribution upon them for God to turn them over to their idol-gods for help in their day of calamity. Can they hope to find the help they need there? Ah! the madness of such a hope!

13. For *according to* the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and *according to* the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to *that* shameful thing, *even* altars to burn incense unto Baal.

This gives us a vivid view of the extent of idolatry at this time—idol-gods in every city throughout all the land and in every street of Jerusalem.——Very concise and expressive is the original—"altars to *that shame*"—that shameful thing, Baal. It was a *shame*

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that Israel should turn away from their own immortal, all-glorious Jehovah to this empty, senseless god, and to his vile, polluting worship.——This Baal was the special and chief god of the old nations of Canaan and of Phenicia. His name usually appears in the plural, Baalim, indicating the various forms of his worship, and perhaps also, of his supposed manifestations. The name means properly lord or master, indicating power and control over, especially as derived from possession. It is not certain whether, as applied to this god, it originally referred at all to any of the heavenly bodies, but in process of time the worship of Baal became connected with homage to the sun or to the planet Jupiter. ——The Israelites came early in contact with Baal-worship, first in the wilderness, in the case of Baal-peor (Numb. 25); then among the Canaanites; later, and apparently in a more seductive form, among the Phenicians of Tyre and Zidon. It became to them a fearful temptation and their great national sin.

14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear *them* in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

(See notes on 7: 16.) God had fully purposed to give up this people to destruction. It was the inexorable demand of justice, and he could not reverse it. Hence, he could not hear prayer that looked toward this result, whether offered by themselves or by others.

15. What hath my beloved to do in my house, *seeing* she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.

In its general scope this somewhat difficult passage is manifestly parallel with 7: 10, 11. The Lord asks what his professed people, once beloved for their faith and devotion to himself, have to do now with his temple, that the masses of them should come to perpetrate their horrid abominations there? The holy flesh has passed away from them, and they have it not; all they offer is polluted; and they rejoice in their iniquity. A nearly literal rendering would be, "What is there to my beloved in my house to do this—the abominable wickedness [wrought by] the many; and the holy flesh has passed away from thee [or let them take away the holy flesh from thee], for in thy evil-doing thou rejoicest?"——Nothing could be more offensive to God than to see his people polluting his temple with their idol-altars and idol-worship, thinking to atone for the wickedness of their idolatry by bringing it into God's temple and for the immorality of their life by keeping up some of the Mosaic ritual services. It was enough to seal their doom that they found their chief joy in doing wickedness.

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16. The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, *and* of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken.

"The Lord hath called thy name," is equivalent to, The Lord hath accounted thee *to be*, meaning that heretofore, in the days of her uprightness, the Lord had blessed her and made her a great and prosperous nation; but now he will kindle a fire under her branches, and with the sound of a great crackling, as when dried brush are fired, he will burn her up, etc.

17. For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal.

The same figure continues in the words, "the Lord hath planted thee."——A slight play may be noticed upon the twofold sense of the word "evil," which may mean either physical evil, *calamity;* or moral evil, *sin;* thus: The Lord hath pronounced evil in the sense of calamity, judgment, against thee for the evil, *i. e.*, the sins of the house of Israel.——Here, as repeatedly before, the great central sin which has so provoked the wrath of God is the worship of Baal.

18. And the LORD hath given me knowledge *of it*, and I know *it:* then thou showedst me their doings.

The passage (vs. 18–23) treats of a new subject, and enters upon it abruptly, as men are wont to speak or write when excited by a sense of danger, and of merciful deliverance.——While the prophet was living quietly in his native Anathoth, suspecting no danger, all suddenly the Lord reveals to him that his fellow-citizens there, and even some of his relatives (12: 6), were plotting his murder. With these facts before us, the sense will be plain.——Literally, "The Lord caused me to know, and then I knew; then he made me see their doings."

19. But I *was* like a lamb *or* an ox *that* is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, *saying*, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

"But I was like a lamb, even a pet or tamed lamb" (not an "ox"), but one kept in the house among the children (see 2 Sam. 12: 3); yet was I suddenly seized to be dragged to the slaughter. "I had not known" (*i. e.*, till the Lord showed me) "that they had laid plans to take my life."

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20. But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

The Hebrew is not necessarily a prayer, a malediction, in the sense, "*Let* me see," etc. It is the simple future, "I shall see;" I am sure of it, because I have laid open my case before thee [my God], and so have committed it to thee. The committal is the thing implied. The laying open to God is all that the verb legitimately expresses. But, in such a case, the laying open before God is the preliminary act, and implies the committal. The fact that the Lord had specially apprised him of his danger might well be taken as a guarantee that he would also take care to deal righteously with those wicked persecutors. Jeremiah, perhaps, remembered that when he accepted his prophetic office, the Lord apprised him of its dangers, and promised him ample protection and strength to endure.

21. Therefore thus saith the LORD of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand:

22. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine:

23. And there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, *even* the year of their visitation.

And here the Lord assures his prophet, and directs him to write it out for a warning to other persecutors, that he would terribly punish and utterly exterminate those wicked men of Anathoth who had sought to seal his lips, that he should not speak truthfully the word of the Lord.

CHAPTER XII.

The first six verses treat of one subject, analogous to that of the next preceding passage (11: 18-23), only that this passage (12: 1-6) seems to touch the history of which both treat at a point somewhat earlier than that. For this represents the prophet as troubled by the prosperity of the wicked (vs. 1, 2), as annoyed by their wickedness, and, perhaps, by their opposition to him as the Lord's prophet, and still as not having yet seen the worst, and especially as not yet aware that his own brethren and nearest relatives are plotting his destruction (vs. 5, 6). The former passage (11: 18-23), as we have seen, touches the history at a point

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further on, where the Lord reveals to him the treachery of his friends; puts him in a way to escape their plots, and announces their doom of utter destruction.——The rest of the chapter (vs. 7–17) seems to have no special connection with the first six verses. It may be properly dated in the early years of the reign of Jehoiakim.

1. Righteous *art* thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of *thy* judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? *wherefore* are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

2. Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou *art* near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

The prophet opens with a full and cheerful admission that the Lord always has *right* on his side; that his ways are always and altogether righteous; yet he finds himself perplexed by the prosperity of the wicked, and he therefore begs to bring the matter before the Lord for explanation.——It may well be supposed that this refers primarily to what he saw near home in his own city Anathoth, since he naturally felt a special interest in the moral state and welfare of this people, whom he had doubtless admonished faithfully, and prayed for most earnestly, and hence felt the more keenly his failure of success. And here, in passing, let us note the admirable spirit of the prophet in these communings with God respecting his ways toward men. Closely related as we are to the ungodly in this world, it will often happen that we feel constrained to talk with God of his righteous judgments, yet let us always begin with the full and most hearty acknowledgment that God is always just and righteous. Let it be understood, in the outset, that we can never call this in question. So much is forever fixed and to be assumed. Nor should we talk with God of his judgments in any other spirit than that of submission to his will, and of confidence, not in his justice alone, but in his wisdom and love no less.——Those neighbors of Jeremiah made fair professions; talked well, perhaps, about God; but, alas, they had no real fear of his name; their inner heart was only wickedness.

3. But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried my heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

The thought of their hypocrisy suggests his own moral state, and he now calls God to witness that in his very heart he does fear and love the Lord. He is conscious of an honest, sincere heart toward God. In the pending conflict between these ungodly men and himself which at least threatened to be mortal to one

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party or the other, he is sure that God will be on his side, and will drag to the slaughter those who have plotted his death. The Hebrew has it, "As sheep for sacrifice." "Prepare" means to set apart—here to destruction.

4. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.

Viewed comprehensively, the spirit of this first clause is, How long shall even nature herself and the unsinning and unintelligent creation of God be cursed for the sins of men? How long shall "the whole creation groan and travail in pain together" for the monstrous guilt of the intelligent and moral portion?——This is a touching and momentous question: How can a righteous God endure that a paradise should be desolated and (we might almost say) turned to a hell, and his sentient but unintelligent and not moral creatures be held under this burden of suffering because of the great wickedness of the moral beings who will rebel against their Maker? Here, the very land itself seemed to be in mourning, vegetation withered (as in chap. 14); beasts and fowls were starving or seeking sustenance by flight to other uncursed lands. Hosea (4: 3) has the same conception of a land so desolated because of its wickedness, that beasts, birds, and fishes disappeared. Only a dismal solitude, cheered by no music of birds or joy of herds and fishes, could fitly correspond to the moral state and just doom of such sinners.——In the last clause "He" who "shall not see our last end," is supposed by some to be God; by others to be the prophet. To the latter view there seems no objection. I take it in this sense: "They say, He (Jeremiah) proclaims that we are doomed to speedy destruction. What does he know about that? He will never see it;" meaning probably that it will not occur, to be seen; or possibly, if things grow worse and more alarming, we will take his life, and so he shall not live to see our latter end. In the former construction it evinced their skepticism; in the latter, their madness and infatuation; in either case a state of mind desperately set against God in its wickedness.

5. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied thee*, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

The close connection of v. 6 with this v. 5, requires us to interpret this as spoken to the prophet, and as implying that greater toils and conflicts await him, and therefore it is not well for him to faint under these of lesser severity. He has already encountered some persecution; much more and worse is near at hand.

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——The expressions are proverbial, but clear and forcible. If in a race with footmen he found himself wearied, how could he stand a race with horses? If in a quiet, peaceful land where he had no reason to fear dangerous animals, he was in terror, how would he do along the thickets of Jordan where the lions had their lairs?——This phrase translated "the swelling of Jordan," occurs elsewhere in this prophet, 49: 19, and 50: 44. Also in Zech. 11: 3. In Jeremiah it is uniformly rendered as here, but in Zechariah, "the pride of Jordan." In each of these three passages, it is thought of as the place where lions had their coverts. Hence, the phrase can not refer to the rise of the waters of the Jordan, but must refer to the thickets and shrubbery which might be considered the pride and glory of Jordan. The original word means that which is high, excellent, distinguished. The connection of v. 5 with what precedes may seem abrupt. It is rather thought than expressed. The tone of the prophet's remarks throughout vs. 1–4 reveals a mind much exercised with the wickedness of men who were probably thought of by him as his personal enemies and persecutors. The Lord proceeds here somewhat abruptly to apprise him that worse enemies and sterner conflicts await him.

6. For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

The general sentiment of this verse is, that his own brothers of the same father and family were dealing treacherously with him, speaking fair words, but plotting foulest deeds. This would be the severest of all his trials, corresponding to the race with horses or to meeting the lions that spring forth from the thickets on the Jordan. It must have been bitterly trying and even agonizing to this sensitive prophet to find that while he is deploring so deeply the wickedness of those men of Anathoth and elsewhere, all suddenly the Lord apprises him that his own brothers are deep in this plot for his murder! Whom can he trust any more? Does such wickedness break out in his own dear home, among those who honor the same father and have been borne on the bosom of the same mother, and for whom he has prayed and wept so often and so long? Alas! what grief oppresses his soul!——The precise sense of the middle clause of the verse is very much in dispute: "Yea, they have called a multitude after thee." This version would mean, They have rallied a great mob to hunt thee down. But the original does not give us the words we might expect for this idea. Others (not badly) translate, They cry loudly, with full voice, after thee, saying (we may suppose), "Away with him;" "kill him," etc. Still others: "They call out behind thy back, "Full," *i. e.*, his days are full; let him live no longer. In the original the verb naturally means, to proclaim words, to utter them forth.

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In a case of this sort an elliptical, half-blind and enigmatic utterance is not unnatural, *e. g.*, "Full;" "full enough;" *i. e.*, of such dangerous prophesying; or full enough [is he] of days spent so! The word "even" indicates that a yet stronger and more astounding statement is to come. This word therefore favors the view last presented.——Finally, this middle clause should naturally be somewhat antithetic with the last, thus: "Behind thee they say, Cut short his days;" to thy face they say good words. This last construction provides for the force of this antithesis.——But God warns him to put no confidence in their fair words.

7. I have forsaken my house, I have left my heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

The remaining part of this chapter is a special message. It may safely be dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, coincident with the circumstances recorded in 2 Kings 24: 1, 2: "In his (Jehoiakim's) days Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it." These bands are alluded to, in this passage, v. 7, as "her enemies;" in v. 9, as "the birds" of prey "round about," and "beasts of the field who come to devour;" in v. 10, as the "pastors" (shepherds), who, with their flocks, have pastured down and destroyed the Lord's land; in v. 12, as "the spoilers," and "the sword of the Lord;" and very decisively, in v. 14, as "mine evil neighbors that touch mine inheritance."——We are, therefore, to bear in mind that, at this time, the Jews had grievously relapsed from God into idolatry and immorality; that their king, Jehoiakim, had rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and that to scourge him and the people the Lord sent bands of Chaldeans, and also bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites to lay the land waste.——There is no apparent connection as to circumstances or date between this message (vs. 7–17) and the preceding one (vs. 1–6), and yet it is supposable that the men who compiled these various messages into one collection or volume, brought this latter message in here with their eye on this relation of thought, viz., You (Jeremiah) have been driven by persecution from your home and inheritance: I, too, have forsaken my house, abandoned mine inheritance, and given up into the hands of their enemies those I once dearly loved.

8. My heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it.

9. My heritage *is* unto me *as* a speckled bird, the birds round about *are* against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.

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Here are the reasons why the Lord abandoned his people ("heritage") to desolation. They were like a lion in the forest, whom no man loves, but all men dread to meet. This lion roared out against God.——In the next verse the later critics render, not "bird," but "wild, ravenous beast," thus: "As a ravenous beast, even a hyena, is mine inheritance to me; the beasts round about" (Syrians, Moabites, etc.) "are against her," etc. If we render the original word "ravenous beast" throughout, we have the probable sense of beasts through this entire verse. Also, the cognate Arabic favors the sense, *hyena*. The general sense is, My people, no longer confiding, affectionate, like tame, domestic animals, have become wild and ravenous; now, therefore, let ravenous and devouring enemies destroy them.

10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

11. They have made it desolate, *and being* desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth *it* to heart.

In many passages of Jeremiah, "pastors" or "shepherds" are their teachers, false or true, who did or should teach them the knowledge of God. But here the connection requires the sense of shepherd, figuratively denoting those robber-bands who fed and trod down the land and laid it desolate, as shepherds with their flocks crop all the vegetation of the pastures of the wilderness. ——The country made desolate seemed to become a mourner before God and unto God, as if sighing for help against such foes, or for vengeance upon them. The *whole* land is laid desolate, and not a part of it only, because there was no man anywhere who laid these calamities to heart, and was moved thereby to turn to the Lord. Hence there were no exempted portions. The desolation swept the whole land.

12. The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.

The spoilers are still those predatory bands. They come up upon all the hills of the wilderness, and devour the whole land. The high hills were usually improved for defense, and fortified against enemies. To come without resistance over all these, implies that they met no effectual opposition.

13. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, *but* shall not profit; and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

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The Jews accordingly lost all their harvests. The grain was well sown, but prematurely destroyed, leaving the land to produce only thorns. They might have toiled even to weariness and pain, but would have no income of any value. They will be ashamed of what increase they get; it will put them to confusion, will confound them with the certain prospect of famine, all because of the fierce anger of the Lord for their sins. The sudden change of person from "*they*" to "*your;*" "*they* shall be ashamed of *your* revenues," is not infrequent in Hebrew, though rare in most modern languages. It seems to have aimed at a deeper impression. The Lord had been speaking in the third person of the Jews, but here, to make them feel that he meant *them*, he suddenly speaks of these revenues (harvests) as being *their own*—"yours."

14. Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbors, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

15. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

16. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

17. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

The remaining four verses of this chapter are rich in promise. The Lord says of those plundering bands, and of the kingdoms from which they come, "I will pluck them, too, out of their land, and rescue the house of Judah from among them, and after that I will have compassion on them, and restore them each to his own land." This, however, only on condition that they learn the ways of God's people, espouse their religion, and fear their God.——To swear by the name of Jehovah as they had been accustomed to swear by Baal, and had taught Israel to do, implies the recognition of Jehovah as the true God. If they would do this heartily, they should be built up among the people of God, and become heirs of the same inheritance of divine mercies; but if not, they must be utterly rooted out and become extinct.——In the better days to come, Gentile nations that are willing to turn thoroughly to the Lord, shall inherit with God's own people. This great truth stands out beautifully here and there in the writings of the prophets. (See it said of Egypt and Assyria, Isa. 19: 19–25; and of Tyre, Isa. 23: 15, 18.)

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CHAPTER XIII.

This chapter is obviously one entire message. It appears here without date. The allusions to the deep infatuation that precedes destruction, v. 13; to the destruction itself, vs. 14, 16; to the humiliation of the king and queen, v. 18; to being carried captive, vs. 17, 19, all conspire to point to the short reign of Jehoiachin as the most probable date. (Compare 2 Kings 24: 10–16.) The prominence given to the king's mother in both this history (2 Kings 24: 15) and this prophecy (v. 18) favors this date. The prophecy points significantly to *pride* as the fundamental sin of the people. To mar this pride was the thing specially signified by this "rotten girdle." Over this pride the prophet would weep sore, as the procuring cause of their ruin (v. 17). It was this that hardened their heart against the efforts made by the Lord, through his prophet, to dissuade them from idolatry, and draw them back to true piety.

1. Thus saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.
2. So I got a girdle, according to the word of the LORD, and put *it* on my loins.
3. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying,
4. Take the girdle that thou hast got, which *is* upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.
5. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me.
6. And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.
7. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing.

This statement is entirely plain. The great question discussed among critics is, whether this was a mere vision or a fact of actual life. I accept it as a fact, because it is affirmed to be a fact in most explicit terms; because mere visions are never put in such terms, but in terms of a very different sort, *e. g.*, "I saw;" "the Lord showed me;" "I was in the Spirit and saw," etc.; also because analogous cases in this prophet must be taken as actual facts, *e. g.*, the breaking of a potter's vessel in Tophet (19: 1–10), and the making of symbolic yokes (27: 2, and 28: 10). This

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whole question has been fully discussed in a special dissertation published in the appendix to the author's notes on the minor prophets.——It was, indeed, a long way from Jerusalem to the Euphrates for a place to hide his linen girdle, but the Lord was quite at liberty to send his servants on long journeys (*e. g.*, Jonah); and in the present case there may have been special objects of sufficient importance to justify the time and toil, *e. g.*, a symbolic intimation that the people of the land were also to be sent there as a means of marring their great pride. Perhaps also the Lord would afford the prophet an opportunity to renew and extend his acquaintance with the captives already there. This extended acquaintance may have prepared the way for his pastoral letter to those captives, chap. 29. If it be still objected that "this would be an expenditure of force out of all proportion to the results gained," the same objection might be made against the sending of not one Jew only, but of fifty thousand Jews as captives to Babylon, which was certainly a large price to pay for a moral result—not to say also that the entire sacrificial system paid a large price for *its* moral results, as if the Lord would teach men that no price is large to pay for moral impressions and results on which the salvation of nations for this world and of human souls for eternity are depending.—— Besides, who knows how great the moral results in the case of the prophet and his people actually were? Who is authorized to assume that they were trivial? And even if it were known that they were, the real question lies still farther back, viz.: Were not the means *wisely adapted* to make strong moral impressions? If so, no presumption can lie against them.*

8. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9. Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.

10. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.

* This argument proceeds upon the assumption that the original word "Phrath" means the river Euphrates. Henderson, in his notes on the passage, and Fuerst in his Lexicon, maintain that this word does not here mean the Euphrates, but Ephrates or Ephrata, otherwise known as Bethlehem. On the contrary, Gesenius and the vast majority of critics translate it the Euphrates. The staple facts of the case are, that this identical word is never in Scripture used for Ephrata; that it is used fifteen times for the river Euphrates, yet in most of the cases with the addition of the word for river (nahar). Since the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Aleph) needs to be added to Phrath to make Ephrath, it is claimed that some Hebrew words drop off this feeble consonant, and hence that Prath, as it stands here, may have done so. To this the reply is that no such usage is found in the case of this word. Hence, if usage gives law to language, there is no law for giving this word the sense of Ephrath. Besides, it is a strong argument for the meaning, Euphrates, that the entire action was purposely symbolic and suggestive of the exile on the Euphrates, to mar the great pride of the nation there.

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11. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

In these verses the Lord gives the explanation of the symbolic act. It represented the fact that he would mar the pride of Judah, and hinted at the agencies he would employ for this purpose, *e. g.*, sending them into captivity to the Euphrates.——We may notice that in the phrases "the pride of Judah," and "the *great* pride of Jerusalem," the people of the city are more proud than those of the country, indicating that the presence of the temple and its worship was one prime ground of their vain-glory. As a man puts on a girdle to bind his otherwise loose garments close to his person, so the Lord had put on his chosen people and bound them to himself, and would joyfully have held them in this relation if they had honored and loved him; but they would not. Hence, he had no alternative left him but to tear off this girdle and hide it away by the Euphrates, to rot there till, humbled under their affliction, they should lie low before him and plead for mercy. The phraseology (v. 11) shows vividly how much the Lord would have honored his people before the world with prosperity, and would have counted their prosperity an honor and a praise to himself, if they had adhered to him in fidelity, love, and obedience. No blessings are too great for God to give to his willing, trustful people, provided only they are so humble that he can bless them safely, and so dutiful that he can bless them with honor to himself.

12. Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?

It is safe to assume that the phrase "every bottle shall be filled with wine," was a proverb; but its usual significance as a proverb is not absolutely certain. Perhaps this: Since bottles were used also for water and for milk, the demand for them *all* ["every bottle"] for wine might mean, *The wine-harvest has come.* Correspondingly the Lord meant to say, The harvest-hour of my judgments has come; the wine-cup of doom must go round to my people and to all the nations to drink. (See chap. 25: 15–28.) All the people of the land, their king, princes, corrupt priests and false prophets especially, must be filled with drunkenness in the moral sense of mad infatuation. The main point of the verse, however, is to bring out the insulting retort of the people: Could not you tell us something that we do not already know? What is the use of making so much parade of speeches that are nothing

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to the purpose? Do not we know it all? This is an illustration of their great pride. Is it strange that it provoked the Lord to the sharp reply that follows?

13. Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness.

14. And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

This use of the idea of drunkenness to represent the analogous infatuation that both naturally and judicially precedes destruction, occurs very frequently in the prophets, drawn out most fully by Jeremiah, chap. 25; but appearing in Isa. 51: 17–21, and 63: 6, and often in the minor prophets. It is, indeed, a terrible fact in the providential government of God over nations, and sometimes over individuals as well, that when they scorn his wisdom and scoff at his word, he turns their wisest counsels into foolishness, gives up their heart to madness, and so lets them rush and reel on to the drunkard's doom. The history of all the world has scarcely furnished a more striking case of this sort than appears in our own age and country, in the *Great Slaveholders' Rebellion.* Intoxicated with the wealth, the political power, and the aristocratic prestige that came of slavery, they were glorying in their shame, vainly assuming that there was no God to hear and avenge the oppressed. Indeed, very like the Jews of Jeremiah's time, they strangely fancied that they had bought the Almighty over to their side by the forms of worship which they condescended to accord to him. Then irked by the moral rebukes which came down upon them from their conscientious neighbors, and pretending to fear lest the scepter of political ascendency might sometime be wrested from their grasp, and determined to make their cherished slavery perpetual, they struck for rebellion and a slaveholding independence. It was the veriest infatuation of madness. It was God's short road to universal liberty for every bondman in all the land. He "caught the wise in their own craftiness." He suddenly snapped the fetters that had seemed to defy all earth and heaven to break them. Were there not fearful tides of desolation sweeping again and again over the regions long desecrated by slave-auctions, scourgings, blood-hounds—evermore to be remembered for the tears that ever fell, and the groans that never ceased, and the prayers that ever rose to God from the crushed and almost despairing slave? Then the Lord wrote his name athwart the southern sky of our American Republic—*the righteous God, who hears the cry of the oppressed, and who breaks in pieces the oppressor.*——In v. 14, the verb rendered "dash them

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one against another," carries with it the accessory idea of scattering them far away. The last clause reads literally, "will not have mercy *so as not to* destroy," *i. e.*, the cherished mercy and kindness of his nature shall not prevent his destroying them—a startling truth, which heaven-defiant sinners, who rest their vain hope in the assumed mercy of God, would do well to heed.

15. Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken.

16. Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, *and* make *it* gross darkness.

Whoever appreciates the circumstances under which this message was sent, will feel that it is both beautifully appropriate and exceedingly solemn. A people who had filled their cup of iniquity almost to the brim; who were quivering on the verge of a ruin fearfully appalling; who yet were horribly proud, and could scarcely be induced to hear the first word Jehovah might say, are to be addressed with one more appeal—the very last—in the hope that it may save them. O, *if* they would only hear; then one short step would perhaps be made toward their help. "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud (there is good reason why not): for *the Lord hath spoken.*" Should not mortal man bend his ear to listen when God deigns to speak? Shall he suffer his pride to be his ruin, as if it were beneath his dignity to hear his Maker? ——"Give glory to the Lord your God," by humbling yourselves before him, by fully acknowledging his justice and his right to reign, and by deeply repenting of your sins against him. All this and more must be implied in giving glory to the Lord your God. A case in point, for illustration, occurs in the words of Joshua to Achan: "I pray thee, my son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him" (Josh. 7: 19). On the vital question of right and wrong between the sinner and God, the sinner gives due glory to God only when he humbles himself and confesses that the wrong is wholly on his side; the right wholly with God.——The Lord enforces this appeal through his prophet by implying that a short time only remains ere, otherwise, judgment without mercy must be their doom. Hasten, "before he cause darkness," in the sense of deeper calamity; "before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains"—lost wanderers through unknown mountain forests, daylight all gone, where pitfalls and precipices lie in wait, and there can be but a step between you and death.——"And while ye look for light"—in vain hope, anticipating the break of day, or some rift in the thick clouds that close in heavily on your path—God shall turn your darkness of night and of cloud into the darkness of death-shade, and make it utter blackness of darkness.——This graphic picture of misery and woe coming on the proud sinners of his time had its eye upon

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that fearful war just then impending, destined to bring sword, famine, and pestilence upon the land, and then sweep off the survivors into a long and desolate captivity.

17. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive.

The spirit of this affectionate prophet stands before us here in exquisite beauty. He longed to have the people hear, but he could not compel them. All he could do to induce them he would most cheerfully and gladly. But if his best endeavors fail, there is one resort left him; he can find some secret place to weep over their guilty pride. He will not fall back upon the stiff and tearless relief of misanthropy; he will not, can not say, Ye deserve it all; it is only good enough for such guilty wretches. No; but he will seek some secluded spot, and there give vent to his grief in tears. Ah, indeed! with a true and noble heart he bewails the guilty pride and madness of his people.——He understands full well the form which this ruin will assume; "the Lord's flock carried away captive."——This public statement to the people, backed up, we must suppose, by his known character for a tender spirit and a tearful eye, was in place here as one hopeful means of making an impression upon the people. It was a testimony to his honest belief in their danger, and to the solicitude and even anguish of his heart in view of their certain ruin unless they should repent.

18. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, *even* the crown of your glory.

This allusion to "the queen" indicates that she held a somewhat prominent position in the government. This often occurred when the king was a minor, as in the case of Jehoiachin. I follow the statement in 2 Chron. 36: 9, rather than the conflicting one in 2 Kings 24: 8, thus making Jehoiachin eight years old, and not eighteen, when he came to the throne. The short term has also the sanction of 1 Esdras 1: 43, and is the more probable. His mother was a woman of some note, her name Nehushta being given us. She was doubtless not only queen-mother, but queen-regent.——"Say to the king and to the queen, take a low place," *i. e.*, before God. The sense of the two verbs essentially coalesces in this one idea: Humble yourselves by coming down from your proud throne and sitting in the dust, penitent before the Lord.—— The word "principalities" should be read "your diadems" [tiaras], the head-ornaments that indicate royalty. The last clause is explanatory, "even your crown of glory."

19. The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none

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shall open *them;* Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive.

Judah, as a whole, was in the southern part of Palestine, and since the invading foe came from the north (v. 20), "the cities of the south" seem not to be those of southern Judea alone, but those of *all* Judea in southern Palestine. They were all closely besieged, and neither the king nor his army or people had power to raise the siege and open those gates. The whole people were doomed to be borne away captive.

20. Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where *is* the flock *that* was given thee, thy beautiful flock?

The address here is to the king or to the ruling power conceived of as one. Look at your mortal foes sweeping down upon you from the north. Where is the flock, the Lord's flock (v. 17), "the beautiful flock" intrusted to your keeping, *i. e.*, the people of Judah?

21. What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught them *to be* captains, *and* as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

The verb rendered "punish" should here take the very frequent sense, *put in charge*, thus: What wilt thou say when he (God) shall put in charge over thee these Chaldean princes, for thou hast taken them to be thy head men, thy chosen friends put at thy head? The idea is, that they had accepted the gods of those foreign nations, and had thus brought themselves into relations of acknowledged inferiority and subjection, so that now they could in nowise complain if the Lord put the princes of those nations in power over their whole land.——When they should come to experience this natural result of their idolatry, would not the pangs of travail seize upon them?

22. And if thou say in thy heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, *and* thy heels made bare.

If they ask, Why so much ruin upon me? God answers, Because of the greatness of thine iniquity. The terms of this reply look to the shamelessness of their spiritual adultery, *i. e.*, their idolatry.——"Discover," not in the sense of finding by search, but of exposing to the public gaze. "Heels made bare" is rather, heels violently made naked.

23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

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The stubbornness of their hearts; the strength and persistence of this spirit of idolatry; the extreme difficulty of effecting a moral change, and the entire failure of all efforts thus far made to reclaim the people—are tersely expressed by this analogy. "Can the Ethiopian change his black skin to white, or the leopard remove his spots?" When they can, then may these invincible habits of your sin be broken up by mere persuasion, and without such stern and terrible remedies as war and captivity.——It would be a grievous abuse of this Scripture to infer from it that in God's view the people themselves had no more power to break off their sins than the Ethiopian to change his black skin to white. To give it this construction is at once to nullify his implied charge of guilt in the people, is to take the blame from them and throw it back upon their Maker; for who can blame the Ethiopian for not changing his skin, or the leopard for not changing his spots?—— The demands of the context are, as above indicated, that the Lord intends to show the hopelessness of his labors to reclaim them by persuasion and by moral appeals only; and hence, the necessity that lies upon him to resort to the stern alternative of a fearful captivity—as he says in the next verse, "*Therefore* will I scatter them as the stubble driven by the wind from the wilderness."

24. Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness.

25. This *is* thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood.

"The portion of thy measures" is the portion allotted, measured out for thee. The reason is, because thou hast forgotten me and trusted in lies.

26. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear.

27. I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, *and* thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when *shall it* once *be?*

These figures have occurred already (2: 23, 24, and 3: 2). They are fearfully significant of the shamelessness of her idolatries and the depth of moral corruption which they involved.—— O, if Jerusalem would only consent to be made clean! After how long shall it be? The prophet longs for the distant day when the processes of divine judgment shall have taken effect, and the nation shall be once more washed clean of this great pollution, incurred by her worship of idol-gods.

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CHAPTER XIV.

This chapter and the fifteenth belong to one discourse. No date appears, nor does there seem to be any thing in the discourse itself to fix its date precisely. It was occasioned by a fearful drought. This fact gives tone to the whole. It was also a time of war and famine (v. 18), and the people were just on the eve of captivity. But to which of the several seasons of captivity this refers, is not clear. There were three principal seasons, viz., in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; at the close of the short reign of Jehoiachin; and at the close of the reign of Zedekiah.——This chapter opens with a graphic description of fearful drought, vs. 2–6; records the prophet's interceding prayer, vs. 7–9; the Lord's answer, vs. 10–12; and further communications between the Lord and his prophet, vs. 13–18; closing with yet another prayer in the spirit of most imploring intercession for his people, vs. 19–22. This chapter is specially interesting as an instance of interceding prayer under most depressing circumstances, even when the Lord had plainly intimated that he could neither hear nor save.

1. The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.

A little attention to the subject-matter of this chapter will show that it is rather the history of a great drought, embracing prayers to God and communications from him, than throughout a message from God concerning the drought. Accordingly, the chapter does not open with the formula which usually precedes and introduces a message that is simply and only a direct revelation from God. This reads literally, "What was the word of the Lord to Jeremiah concerning the words" (or history) "of the drought." The important points of the chapter are those things that come from God in respect to this case of drought.——Let it be borne in mind that drought is one of the forms of great calamity which God had stipulated, ages before, as the penalty to be suffered by the people if they should forsake their God and go into idolatry. The standard passages are Deut. 11: 16, 17, and 28: 23, 24, and Lev. 26: 19, 20. The first of these declares, "God will shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit." The word rendered "dearth" in our text means *the shutting up, restraint*, the withholding of rain.

2. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.

These may best be taken as poetic conceptions of the whole land and the very gates of the city as in deep mourning.

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3. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, *and* found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.

"Ashamed," not in the sense of having done some mean thing which causes shame, but of being confounded, at their wits' end, as those who see nothing more or else that they can do. The ancients covered the head with a veil in token of deep grief and trouble.

4. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.

The word rendered "chapt," legitimately means terrified, stricken with consternation. This is in harmony with those poetic conceptions which we noticed in v. 2. Our translators took the verb in the sense of *cracked open* through excessive drought. The verb scarcely bears that sense.

5. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook *it*, because there was no grass.

6. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because *there was* no grass.

The original word for "dragons" usually means sea-serpents. Little is known of their habits. These animals gave their own signals of suffering under great calamity, "the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together" for the sins of men.

7. O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou *it* for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

Every word of this prayer is exceedingly appropriate; confession of sin; the fullest admission that "our iniquities testify against us;" falling back upon the name, *i. e.*, the nature of God as the only plea.

8. O the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man *that* turneth aside to tarry for a night?

That God had so often been the Savior of Israel in her past seasons of trouble inspired hope yet. The prophet begs that God will come and dwell still with his people, and not be as a stranger,

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one not at home, or as a traveler who stops with you but for a night. All this is beautifully expressive of holy desire and legitimate prayer. The pious implore God to make their heart and their people his permanent abode, and never leave them.

9. Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man *that* can not save? yet thou, O LORD, *art* in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

When the Lord turned away and appeared not for their help, he seemed to the prophet as one confounded, baffled, and not able to save. Why should this be? Is not the arm of Jehovah equal to any demand upon it? strong to save in every emergency? I will not (says the prophet) think of God as far away. Let me rather think of him as still among us, for his name is called upon this people; and let me pray that he will never leave us. Such is his prayer.

10. Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

11. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for *their* good.

12. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

The Lord replies that the people have wholly given up their heart to sin, have loved to wander from him; that the time of retribution has now come, and he must punish. Therefore he can not hear the prophet's prayer, and requests him to desist. Indeed, if the people themselves were now to pray even with fasting and sacrifice, the Lord could not hear their cry or accept their offerings.

13. Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

This is designed as in part an apology for the people. They have been deceived and misled by their false prophets.

14. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy

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unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of naught, and the deceit of their heart.

15. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

16. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

The Lord replies that those were only lying prophets, speaking not from him, but of the deceit and vanity of their own hearts. He can take no responsibility for their lies. But those very prophets shall be terribly destroyed by the very sword and famine which they declared should *not* come upon the land. And the people whom they had deceived could not be held innocent. They should have known better. They too must be cast out to lie unburied; for God will pour back upon them the fruit of their own great wickedness.

17. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

It may be noticed that although the Lord could not hear the prayer either of the prophet or of the people, and though he could not at this stage turn from his purpose of retribution to pardoning and restoring mercy, yet he was pleased to have the prophet mourn and lament over their ruin, and even tell the people that his tears should flow for them long and freely.——Must we not admit that the Lord was pleased to have his prophet sympathize with the woes of his countrymen, and accounted this as legitimate and right? A further reason for saying this to the people may have been to add force to his entreaties and exhortations to repentance. Such tears were a witness to his honesty as well as to his sympathy; and the Lord would spare no means or agencies that might augment the power of his appeals to them to repent.

18. If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

There was only too much occasion for tears and grief; because, turn whichever way he might, there were the dying and the dead!

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And even the prophet and the priest were going, driven off into an unknown land, for captivity, to be wanderers there.

19. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us, and *there is* no healing for us? we looked for peace, and *there is* no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

20. We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, *and* the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.

21. Do not abhor *us*, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

22. Are there *any* among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? *Art* not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these *things*.

We must here meet the question, Why does the prophet again break out in prayer after the Lord had said (v. 11), "Pray not for this people for their good?" May we not suppose that he took encouragement from the direction (v. 17) "to give vent to his tears?" May he not have said, "If I may weep for my people, may I not also pray? Would the Lord bid me tell the people that mine eye should run down with tears night and day for them, if really he meant to shut his ear absolutely against all prayer in their behalf? ——The prophet manifestly felt that he could not be denied the privilege of still pouring out his soul in prayer in their behalf. We may observe that this second prayer is less confident and hopeful than the first. *It is specially imploring*, shaded with expostulations. Could any thing be more earnest and impassioned? How mightily he would plead with God if he were only permitted?—— Fitly he makes the fullest possible confession of sin. His main plea is, that the Lord would honor his own great name, for he fears that if God should reject his own people utterly and leave them to hopeless ruin, it would bring scandal on his name before the heathen.——Finally, he puts Jehovah in the strongest contrast with the vanities (idol-gods) of the Gentiles. They can not give rain; can not help the suffering, perishing people: Jehovah can. Why should not God improve the opportunity to make this contrast apparent before all the world? In hope of it we will still wait upon thee.——The next chapter will show us that the Lord was firmly fixed in his purpose to hear no prayer for his sinning people. Yet it does not appear that he frowned on his weeping prophet for this imploring supplication in their behalf. Jeremiah did not take issue with God against his justice, but he did exceedingly desire of the Lord pardoning mercy for the guilty people. The Lord had therefore only to assure him that his request could not be granted.——The history and bearing of this case are exceedingly instructive in regard to the spirit of prayer, and espe-

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cially of prayer for incorrigible sinners dying before our eyes perhaps, without pardon, and indeed for sinners in any circumstances where the Lord can not hear prayer, and our hearts are burdened even to anguish in behalf of the guilty and the lost.

CHAPTER XV.

The subject continues from the previous chapter, the Lord reaffirming his purpose not to hear prayer for the people, but to go on to execute his threatening of sore judgments. Hence, we have the severity and certainty of these judgments discussed, vs. 1–9; then mostly the mental trials, fears, prayers, and anguish of the prophet, with the Lord's reply to him in vs. 10–21.

1. Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, *yet* my mind *could* not *be* toward this people: cast *them* out of my sight, and let them go forth.

Imploring, fervent, and, in the main, appropriate, as the prophet's intercessions for his people were, the Lord having fully purposed to punish, he could not hear prayer for the reversal of that purpose. He must, therefore, give his servant to understand that this point is settled irreversibly. Hence he says, "Even if Moses and Samuel were here pleading before me, my mind could not incline to mercy for this people. Cast them out of my sight"—as if the people themselves stood or were represented before him. "Let them go" from my presence and favor.——The reader who is familiar with the Scripture history of Moses and of Samuel, will readily see why they are named in this connection as striking examples of prevailing intercessory prayer. For the case of Moses, see Ex. 32: 9–35. When, for the sin of the golden calf, the Lord would fain destroy the whole people, Moses literally threw himself into the deadly breach, saying, "O, this people have sinned! Yet, now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and, if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." And he prevailed. For the case of Samuel, see 1 Sam. 7: 8–10, and 12: 16–25; both which passages show that the people relied upon Samuel as an intercessor in their behalf, and that the Lord accepted him as such. But, in the present case, no such intercession could avail. Mercy had "reached its utmost bound, and turned to vengeance there."

2. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as *are* for death, to death;

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and such as *are* for the sword, to the sword; and such as *are* for the famine, to the famine; and such as *are* for the captivity, to the captivity.

3. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

If the people, driven forth from the presence of God, inquire, Whither shall we go? the Lord answers, Some to one form of destruction; some to another; all, to ruin.——In such a classification, death means the pestilence, not simply extinction of life, for this is involved more or less under all these forms of destruction. The same expression occurs again chap. 43: 11. In Ex. 9: 3, where our English translation has it—"A very grievous murrain," the Septuagint has words which mean "a very great *death*," showing how naturally the word "death" is used for a very malignant pestilence.

4. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for *that* which he did in Jerusalem.

The great sin of Manasseh filled the cup of the nation's iniquity to the brim. His sins were in themselves of the very worst sort, "for he built altars for all the host of heaven within the very temple of God" (2 Kings 21: 4, 5); "he made his own son to pass through the fire, and observed times, used enchantments, dealt with familiar spirits and wizards; he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger." "Moreover, he shed innocent blood very much till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (vs. 6, 16). The Lord was careful to state very plainly that this terrible captivity came specially for the sins of Manasseh. "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this" (invasion and captivity) "upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight for the sins of Manasseh according to all that he did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed" (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood), "which the Lord would not pardon" (2 Kings 24: 34).——Further, these sins of Manasseh were not only great in themselves; they were also doubly guilty before God, and called with double force for vengeance, because of the great light which he sinned against. Think of his godly father, Hezekiah; of the instruction given to the people of that generation by Isaiah, Micah, Hosea, and Amos; of the striking and most impressive interposition of God in defense of the nation against Sennacherib: think of a youth coming up to manhood amid such surroundings, and then plunging with headlong madness into such depths of appalling wickedness. Is it strange that the Lord should deem such guilt as his utterly unpardonable?

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Alas that he should have borne the nation on with him to such sinning and to a doom so fearful!

5. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?

After such guilt it was meet that Jerusalem should suffer unwept. What traveler passing by would turn aside to give her the customary salutation by asking for her welfare?—literally, "for her peace." The object here is not to reflect upon the prophet for his bitter tears over the fall of his country, but rather to represent her guilt as so great that even Gentile nations and foreign cities would feel that she had richly deserved to bear her doom uncared for and unpitied.

6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting.

Often and most kindly had the Lord called the people to himself; but they had only gone backward from him the more. He had repeatedly threatened, and then relaxed his purpose to punish; waited, borne, and sometimes forgiven; but now he is weary of repenting in this sense, and is fully purposed not to yield to any plea in their behalf, but to go on forthwith to execute his long-threatened judgments. Years had passed since Manasseh's long reign closed and he went to his grave. One more vigorous effort had been made under Josiah, sustained by such men as Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah, to reclaim and save the nation. It had promised fairly for a season, but after Josiah's death the people relapsed with terrific rapidity. They seemed to sink suddenly to a horrible depth of depravity, for only a three-months' reign intervened under Jehoahaz before Jehoiakim mounted the throne, and, in his fourth year, the first great deportation of captives took place. A considerable number of Jeremiah's messages from the Lord bear date within this first four years of Jehoiakim, all showing that the state of morals was appalling, and that the spirit of idolatry was deep and apparently almost universal.

7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave *them* of children, I will destroy my people, *since* they return not from their ways.

"The gates of the land" were the great thoroughfares of travel on those natural routes by which armies, caravans, and travelers usually came and went. At these points, such as the "entering in of Hamath" on the north, the Lord represents himself as standing with a huge winnowing fan to scatter the people abroad

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among the distant nations of the earth. War, cutting off hosts of young men; famine and pestilence following in its train, and laying cold in death daughters, fathers, mothers—left many bereaved of their children. Such agencies multiply widows.

8. Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday: I have caused *him* to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city.

The original does not justify any antithesis of tense between this verse and v. 7, as our English version intimates. Essentially all these verbs in verses 6–9 are either present or in the nearer future, the point where the past and future meet. In v. 8, I would not read "against the mother of the young men;" but, understanding by "the young men" the warriors of the enemy, I would read thus: "I have brought up against them, even against the mothers" (*i. e.*, of the land), "young men (armed), even spoilers at noonday." They rush suddenly upon the people in open day, as if conscious of power adequate to insure success without resort to stratagem or to the aid of darkness or storm. Or an assault at noon may imply its being sudden and unexpected, because, in oriental warfare, that was a very unusual hour for assaulting a city.——In the last clause, the more recent critics give the word rendered city the sense of anxiety, anguish, from a verb which indicates intense heat, and may be applied to the mind. So also in Hosea 11: 9, "I will not come *in wrath*." Hence the translation should omit the word in italics "*him*," thus: "I will cause anguish and terror to fall suddenly upon her, the city."

9. She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while *it was* yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.

The mother of seven (a round but large number of children), was in the Hebrew mind accounted happy and honored. Now she languishes under a specially crushing weight of grief. That of so large a family of sons all are cut off, indicates how wide the extent and how fearful the depth of this calamity.—— "Ashamed and confounded" are here, as usual, not in the sense of shame for mean or wicked conduct, but in the sense of disappointed hopes, and that utter confusion which comes over men who see no ray of light and no escape from ruin.——Thus far, the chapter describes the certainty, nearness, and fearfulness of the nation's impending doom.

10. Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!

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I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; *yet* every one of them doth curse me.

The connecting link of suggestive thought between the doom of his people—which is the prophet's theme in vs. 1–9—and his own personal case, which is mostly the subject onward to the close of the chapter, seems to lie in the prominence given to the *mothers* of Jerusalem in the former portion, suggesting to the prophet the case of his own mother and of himself.——The *heart* of the prophet has not come up to view since we closed chap. 14 till now. We may recollect that we left him there imploring mercy for his people, his very soul gushing forth in tenderest pity over their calamity. In this chapter, the Lord absolutely shuts off his prayer, and then proceeds to give a very touching picture of the miseries that are to fall on young and old, on fathers and especially mothers in the general slaughter. Is it strange that the prophet's mind should revert to himself and to his own lot, as one of almost insupportable trial and anguish? If his prayer might avail to save his people, he could bear any amount of persecution, hate, obloquy, and peril of life. But to be shut off from prayer on the side toward God, and from all sympathy on the side toward men; to receive no messages from the Lord but those of doom and vengeance, and no response from the people but curses; to be thrown into some doubt whether his overflowing sympathies and his general work as a prophet were accepted before God, and to have such terrible assurance that it was in no sense well received by his fellow-countrymen:—all these circumstances constitute a crucible of sevenfold heat to try his temper and to torture his soul. Let us aim to appreciate his circumstances as we proceed to note his words and study his spirit.——His expressions here are by no means so extreme as those of Job (chap. 3) in that hour when, faltering under his almost crushing burden of woe, he cursed his birthday and all its surroundings, because they let him live through that birth-scene in which he so wished that he had died. Jeremiah's words legitimately mean only this: Alas for me that I was born to be a man of strife and conflict to the whole earth! to live only to be a mark to be shot at; a man to be hated and cursed on every side! What have I done that should doom me to such odium? "I have neither lent to others on usury, nor have they so lent to me, yet they all curse me."——These allusions to usury as occasioning public odium, are probably proverbial, showing that the sentiments of the Jews were strongly against it. Their law strictly forbade asking or receiving any interest for money lent. (See Ex. 22: 25; Lev. 25: 35–37.) Jewish writers uniformly class the usurer among bad men. The good man never takes usury. (Prov. 28: 8; Neh. 5: 7, 10; Ps. 15: 5, and Ezek. 18: 8, 13, 17, and 22: 12.)

11. The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy rem-

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nant: verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee *well* in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.

This verse is difficult, especially because the form of the Hebrew word rendered in our version "remnant" * is in doubt. Our received translation can not be right, for the verse refers to the prophet and not to the Jews; and the prophet had no remnant in the sense of posterity known to us. In the next chapter he is directed not to take a wife, and not to have sons and daughters in that place; to which his subsequent history accords.——The better construction is to make it a verb, † and the sense, I will surely *set thee free* for a good end (*i. e.*, by loosing thy bands)—the prophecy assuming that his enemies would bind him with fetters, but God would set him free, which prophecy became history, recorded Jeremiah 40: 4.——The sense of the last clause may be considered fixed: "I will cause the enemy, in the time of his calamity, to come to thee as a suppliant." This was the case with Zedekiah (see chap. 38: 14–24), and perhaps others. The promise showed that though hated, he would be respected, and, to some extent, appreciated and feared as a known messenger of Jehovah.

12. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?
13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and *that* for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.
14. And I will make *thee* to pass with thine enemies into a land *which* thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, *which* shall burn upon you.

The course of thought in our translation is by no means clear. It can scarcely be doubted that vs. 13, 14 refer to the Jews and not to the prophet. It was certainly the Jews who were to be spoiled, their wealth consumed or borne to other lands, in judgment for their sins; and who were to be burned by the fire kindled in the anger of the Lord.——V. 12 is doubtless a proverb, to be applied here to the invincible power of the Chaldean invaders, and best read thus: "Can one break iron, even the northern iron and brass?"——The hardest kind of iron came from the Chalibees on the north, near the Black Sea. The sense: It will be all in vain for the Jews, weak as they are when their God is against them, to break the power of their Chaldean invaders from the north. The double allusion to the north is forcible, the north being at once the quarter whence the hardest iron came, and the quarter whence the invincible Chaldeans came.——The previous verse had intimated a time of sore calamity upon the Jews; this intimates the

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quarter whence it should come, and its resistless power. In v. 13, giving up the wealth of Judea to the spoil "*without price*," means that the Lord cast it out as vile and worthless—a thing not to be cared for. Ps. 44: 12 is in the same strain of thought; while the opposite case—that of selling a people at a dear price, and giving one nation for the redemption and ransom of another, appears in Isa. 43: 3, 4. In our text the thought is that the people are so wicked and the demands of justice for their punishment so great, that the Lord can afford to let all their wealth go without any consideration. The loss of it is nothing weighed against the great moral ends he has in view in scourging them by a seventy years' captivity.——In v. 14, I should not supply "*thee*" as our translation does, but rather "*it*," meaning their substance and treasures. I will cause *it* to pass away, *i. e.*, send *it* (all this wealth) away with [in the hands of] thine enemies. This makes the connection of thought and the sense complete throughout. With this construction, there is no demand for a change of the text (as some have done) to the verb *serve*.

15. O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

This language is abrupt and broken, in the tone of strong feeling. The prophet's natural love of life and indignation against his persecutors demand and obtain utterance.——The middle clause, "Take me not away in thy long-suffering," seems to mean, Let not thy long-suffering toward my enemies prove my ruin. Do not bear with them till they have taken my life.

16. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

He means to say that as soon as he heard the words of the Lord given him to be published, he devoured them greedily—took them to his mind and heart as a hungry man seizes and eats food. This same figure reappears in Ezek. 2: 8, and 3: 1, and in Rev. 10: 9, 10. The prophet loved the words of God, and performed his prophetic work with a dutiful and warmly pious heart. Recognizing himself as bearing the name of the Lord and as devoted to his work, he made it his business and gave his whole heart to it. This is truly a noble record if true, and his history gives rich evidence of its truth.

17. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.

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Standing in such relations to God and with a heart in warm sympathy with him, he could not sit with scorners—could not enjoy what they tried to enjoy, but sat alone with few or none to sympathize with him. The Lord had given him such views of the case as between himself and this wicked people, that his heart, like God's, was burning with indignation against their sin. It seemed to him more than he could bear to think of such an abuse of the great and blessed God, and of such outrageous rebellion against him. Why should not his soul be filled and fired with holy indignation? He expresses the same feeling in 6: 11: "Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in." (See notes on this passage.)

18. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, *which* refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, *and as* waters *that* fail?

This tone of complaint is strong—must we not say *too* strong, especially the implication in the last clause that God had not been altogether truthful and reliable. Was not this the prophet's human infirmity—nature in the ascendant over grace?——It slightly softens the severity of the language to translate as we may, not "as a liar," but "*as a failing brook*, even as waters that fail."

19. Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, *and* thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

The Lord plainly implies that Jeremiah has turned away—has fallen into a wrong temper, and must needs return by repentance. On condition that he will, the Lord says, "I will bring thee again near to me." The very apposite play on the word "*return*" is apparent in the original, but not in our English version.——If thou return (intransitive), I will return thee (transitive), *i. e.*, *cause* thee to return to me. The same verb is repeated, appearing first in an intransitive form, and next in a transitive.——To "stand before me," is to serve as the Lord's prophet. Elijah uses the same phrase in this sense (1 Kings 17: 1, and 18: 15), "The Lord of hosts before whom I stand," etc.——"If thou take forth the precious from the vile," can not pertinently mean to separate the good Jews from the bad, for God's providences were drawing this line; much less can it mean to discriminate the good words from the bad in God's messages, for *all* his words were good; but it may fitly mean, If thou wilt develop and bring out prominently into action thy good qualities, and, on the other hand, suppress and crucify the bad—wilt bring up into vigorous life thy sincerity, thy fidelity, thy love to God, and love to man; thy patience under

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every form and degree of trial; and, on the other hand, wilt suppress all impatience, all insinuations against God, all despondency, and all fear of suffering too much for me; then will I make thee as my mouth, putting thy mouth in place of mine to speak to this people. Let them make concessions to thee; let them be the yielding party, and come to thee for the Lord's counsel; but do thou never yield to them, never conform to their views and their ways. So understood, the passage is exceedingly rich in its instruction to ministers of the gospel. O, how should they stand by and with the Lord their God in unfaltering allegiance, with the firmest adherence to his truth and obedience to his behests! How should they be careful to expel all that is vile from their temper and character, and cultivate all the precious qualities that grace has implanted and would fain develop into vigorous and all-pervading vitality!

20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I *am* with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Jeremiah was called to a stern life of sharp and long protracted trials; but the Lord could say to him as to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." So here in Old Testament phrase indeed, but in the very sense of our blessed Lord to Paul, Jehovah promises to make his prophet "a fortified brazen wall" which they might assail but could not overthrow, nor even breach. See 1: 18, 19, where the same promise was given him in the outset of his prophetic life.——Will it not always be true that the Lord stands by those who stand by him; will make their strength as their day, and apportion grace to the measure of human infirmity and weakness? Only let his servants put their trust in him, so shall their souls never be put to shame.

CHAPTER XVI.

The special message commencing here embraces the entire sixteenth chapter, and the first eighteen verses of chap. 17. The date is not given, but the subject-matter favors its date in the third or fourth year of Jehoiakim, about the time when he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and "the Lord brought upon the land bands of Chaldeans, Syrians," etc., resulting in the first deportation of cap-

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tives to Babylon. (See 2 Kings. 24: 1, 2.) These calamities were obviously just at hand—the first installment of that series of judgments which closed with the final and utter devastation and depopulation of the country.

1. The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying,
2. Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons nor daughters in this place.
3. For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;
4. They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; *but* they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

The prophet, remaining unmarried and without family by a special command of the Lord, would be a standing testimony to the people of the judgments impending over the land. It was also a kindness to him, exempting him from some cares that might otherwise have greatly augmented the difficulties of his very difficult work. In the case of some other prophets, the Lord made use of their marriage relations for symbolic purposes; *e. g.*, Hosea (1: 2), Ezekiel (24: 15–27).——This threatening in v. 4, must be estimated in the light of the views held by ancient oriental nations respecting the burial of their dead and their horror of lying unburied to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey. (See notes on chap. 8: 1–3, and 9: 22.)

5. For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, *even* loving-kindness and mercies.

The prophet, as toward God and the people, was a representative man, acting under special divine direction, and therefore representing before the people the mind of God in regard to them. Hence, the Lord directed him to refrain from the usual expressions of sympathy and grief when calamity and death came upon the guilty people. God had withdrawn from them his peace and prosperity. Hence, the bearing of his prophet toward them should indicate this fact.

6. Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall *men* lament for

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them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:

7. Neither shall *men* tear *themselves* for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother.

8. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink.

Cutting their own flesh was coupled with tearing out their hair, and with most bitter wailing, as tokens of extreme grief. In the first clause of v. 7, the English margin best expresses the sense of the Hebrew: "Men shall not break bread for them on occasions of mourning," it being the custom to carry bread into a family who were mourning their dead, the assumption being that they were too much oppressed with grief to prepare their necessary food. This was sometimes carried to the extent of a real feast, in which the friends who supplied the table partook.——It may be noted that some of these expressions forbid the prophet to participate in such scenes, while others affirm that the people will suspend their usual customs. Each of these facts had its significance.

9. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

Essentially the same things are said chap. 7: 34. See notes there. That this should occur before their eyes and in their days, indicates it to be very near at hand.

10. And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what *is* our iniquity? or what *is* our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?

11. Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshiped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;

12. And ye have done worse than your fathers; for behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:

13. Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, *neither* ye nor your fathers; and

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there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor.

Note the care taken to make the people inquire after the *causes* of these sore calamities. For the desired moral results this was of the utmost consequence. The Lord would have them understand that these judgments came because of their great sins, and very particularly because of their sins in the worship of idol-gods, and in violation of his law generally. These phrases have occurred before.

14. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

15. But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

These words of promise are interposed here for the comfort of all pious hearts, to show that these judgments would not exterminate the nation utterly, for yet a remnant should survive and should still enjoy the rich mercies of the God of their fathers. The deliverance from this new captivity would so greatly eclipse the exodus from Egypt as quite to supersede it in the thought and speech of the people. The former would cease to be named as *the* one great deliverance; the latter would take its place. In form the same promises occur again 23: 7, 8. In spirit they are essentially embraced in chap. 3: 16–18. The primary reference here is to the restoration from captivity in Babylon.

16. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

17. For mine eyes *are* upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

The fact that in v. 17 the sins of the people are assigned as the ground or reason of thus searching out his people with fishers and hunters to glean up the last remnants, shows that the passage refers to emptying the land of its population to send into their captivity, and not to gathering up the captives to bring them back.

18. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have

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filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things.

The first clause I understand to mean, *not*, I will recompense their sin *first* in order of time, and make this recompense *double;* but, I recompense their first and their second—their former and their latter sin and iniquity—the former being those of their fathers to which allusion is made in vs. 11, 12, and which are therefore naturally embraced here. The latter were their own, said above (v. 12) to be worse than their fathers. These detestable and abominable things were their idol-gods, their carcasses the idol-images, contemptuously spoken of as things dead and rotten, in contrast with the ever-living God.

19. O LORD, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and *things* wherein *there is* no profit.

20. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they *are* no gods?

Here the prophet speaks, giving us however in the last half of v. 19 and in v. 20 what he conceives the Gentiles to say. Addressing God as his own strength and refuge, he expresses his confident assurance that Gentile nations, taught by his dealings with Israel, will come to the true God, acknowledging that the idol-gods of their fathers were lies and vanity, and astonished that a man should think to *make* his own gods which yet could be no gods at all. This must have been a most delightful anticipation to the tried and tender heart of this prophet. It would be an oasis in his desert, to foresee that these fearful chastisements upon Israel would open the eyes of Gentile nations to the folly of idols, and to the glorious attributes of the real Maker and Lord of all.

21. Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know my hand and my might; and they shall know that my name *is* The LORD.

"Therefore" means *for this result*, in order to secure this object, I will make them know in their experience my hand (as an instrument of power), they shall know that my name is Jehovah, the ever-living and changeless God. The people who are thus to know his hand, are primarily (as I understand it) the Jews, to whom the chapter mainly refers. He will give his people this experience for the sake in part of its influence on the heathen—as much as to say, Very true, the influence of these judgments on my apostate people will reach and bless the heathen, *therefore* all the more will I make my people know the power of my hand and the glorious attributes of my eternal being.

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CHAPTER XVII.

As indicated in remarks introductory to chap. 16, the first eighteen verses of this chapter may be considered as a continuation of the same message. The thought turns on the depth and strength of the national sin (vs. 1, 2); the exterminating judgments that must ensue (vs. 3, 4); the comparative results of trusting in man and trusting in God (vs. 5–8); the treachery of the heart, the instability of riches, the scoffs of the wicked against the prophet's messages, and his consequent prayer.

1. The sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron, *and* with the point of a diamond: *it is* graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;
2. Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.

Documents of great importance, and designed for the greatest durability, were anciently engraved on stone or on plates of brass or copper, with a *stylus*, having an iron or even a diamond point. To this v. 1 refers, the figure being designed to show that the sin of Judah lay deep in their heart, so that no human power could erase and remove it. The conception of their sin as engraved on their hearts is carried over to the horns of their idol-altars, which, in like manner, were living witnesses to the long and deeply-rooted sins of the people.——The precise meaning of the second verse, and the exact shade of thought which connects it with the first, are not easily determined. The choice seems to lie between these two constructions: (*a.*) Their sin is so deep in their hearts, and has so thoroughly pervaded the whole popular mind, that their children take it naturally, and remember (affectionately) their altars, etc. In this way the connecting particle might be rendered *so that* their children, etc. This I take to have been the thought of our translators, "Whilst they remember," etc. (*b.*) The sin of Judah, and especially her sin of idolatry, is deep in her heart; as the memory (*i. e.*, love) of children do they love their altars, groves, etc. In this construction, v. 2 amplifies and illustrates the thought of v. 1, by comparing Judah's love of idols to the love felt for children in parental bosoms. As parents love their children with an enduring love, that no perverseness can eradicate, and no coldness or ingratitude can quench; so do this people love their idol-altars and groves. In favor of this latter construction are these two very important considerations: (1.) That the Hebrew particle naturally indicates comparison, *like* remembering children, etc., and does not easily bear the sense given in the other construction. (2.) That the thought in this way advances and its expression grows stronger, while, on the other theory, it rather grows weaker. On this construction the sentence is somewhat elliptical, which, however, is no serious objection.

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3. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance *and* all thy treasures to the spoil, *and* thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.

Here, again, it is difficult to fix with certainty upon the precise shade of thought. "My mountain" must be the hill of Zion, or the temple-mountain. The word for "field" means the open country, as opposed to the city, and a plain, level country as opposed to a mountain. In neither of these senses can the temple-mountain be said to be "*in* the field." This is one difficulty. The corresponding expression, in the second clause, having the same preposition before it, is "*sin*," which our translators render "*for* sin;" but which the Hebrew naturally requires to be read "*in* sin," or, at least, to be translated in a way corresponding to "*in* the field" in the first clause. It will scarcely bear to render, "I" (*i. e.*, God) "will give" (devote) "thy high places *for sin* in all thy borders." What could this mean? These are other difficulties. ——Gesenius gives it this construction: "My mountain, Zion, *with* the field, will I give as spoil, and thy high places *with their sin*— *i. e.*, with their idols." Maurer thus: "My mountain I will reduce to a plain; thy wealth and all thy treasures will I give for spoil; *because of thy sin* in all thy borders."——It seems to me that the passage Micah 3: 12, was so far before the prophet's mind as to affect his choice of words, and somewhat his forms of expression, and that this may account for the lack of perfect method and clearness in his sentences. "For your sakes shall Zion be plowed a field, and Jerusalem be heaps of ruins, and the temple-mountain become the high places of a forest." The important words "Zion," "field," "mountain, high places," are the same in both passages, and the thought in each is the same.——The general sense must suffice us in a case where the nicer shades of thought remain so uncertain.

4. And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, *which* shall burn forever.

The rendering, "Thou, even thyself," is not quite satisfactory, there being no apparent reason for this emphasis on "thyself." What is it contrasted with? What is the significance of the emphasis?——I take the sense of the original to be, "Thou for *thine own sake*," *i. e.*, because of thine own sins, as the fruit of thine own doings, and not because of any fatality or accident, or for any cause extraneous to thyself, "shall cease from thine heritage," etc. (See the same thought in chap. 15: 13.)

5. Thus saith the LORD; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

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6. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a salt land and not inhabited.

The Hebrew language, having three distinct words for *man*, has the advantage of our English in the finer shades of a passage like this. "Cursed is the man" [the *strong* man *] "who trusteth in man" [frail man† of the earth], "who maketh flesh" (mere weakness as opposed to spirit) "his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord"—in the sense of forsaking his service and worship, and hence of necessity ceasing to trust in God as his strength.——The *heath* in the desert, according to our English version, would be a shrub which might possibly live in the desert under favorable circumstances. Some critics (Henderson, Robinson) take the word to mean the *juniper;* but I prefer to give it the sense, not of any vegetable, but of a man *naked*, desolate, helpless, alone, far out on the Sahara, to whom no good shall come, or perhaps, who would be too blind to see any good if it were to come, whose dwelling-place is on the hottest and most desolate sands. "A salt land" in the sense of sterile, as if sown with salt, and where no man dwells. The picture is of one who is cut off from all earthly good, from friends, society, helpers in trouble, every thing that gives comfort to man, or joy to human life. The original word rendered "heath" occurs in the Hebrew Bible only here and in Ps. 102: 18. "He has turned unto the prayer of the *destitute*, and does not despise their prayer." Here "the destitute" can not be the heath, nor any thing else but a human being. Dr. Alexander remarks of it, that "from its etymological affinities, and its intensive form, it appears to mean, stark naked, and then figuratively, stripped of every thing, impoverished, entirely destitute." Probably Jeremiah had in his eye king Jehoiakim then reigning, whose heart had utterly departed from the Lord, who, in the face of remonstrance from God had trusted in the weak king of Egypt for help against the king of Babylon, but all in vain.——The sentiment is good for all time and for all circumstances; not for kings alone in their political relations and responsibilities for their people, but for every individual, everywhere and always. The moment we accept the truth of God's universal providence and take in the precious views of it given by our divine Lord (Matt. 6: 25–34) as shown in God's care for the fowls of heaven and the lilies and grass of the field, we shall see the fitness of "casting all our care upon him because he careth for us," and because his care is infinitely more and better than our own.

7. Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

† אָדָם * הַגֶּבֶר

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8. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

In beautiful antithesis stands the case of him who trusteth in the Lord. He is blessed. He is an oriental tree whose roots find living water on the river bank, and which has no occasion for anxiety in the year of drought. In this passage the author's mind is manifestly on that beautiful description Ps. 1: 3, which paints the blessedness of the good man. His heart always green and verdant, his life always bearing the fruits of holiness, he is a living witness to the riches of grace and to the wealth of resources for essential victory over sin which lie stored in the bosom of our God, ever flowing out to fill the hungry, humble, trusting souls of his people.

9. The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The plain sense of this verse is, that the heart is more deceitful than any other known thing, and is sick unto death—a case to be despaired of—so deceitful and so bad that the world may be challenged to fathom and search it all out. "Who can know it" to the bottom? There is no word in Hebrew corresponding to our English word, "wicked." Hopelessly, irrecoverably deceitful so far as human relief goes, seems to be the sense of the original. ——There is reason for the suggestion that the prophet had the case of king Jehoiakim specially in mind here, as also in vs. 6, 7. But his form of statement is general and applies to the deep and subtle depravity of the unrenewed heart in all men.

10. I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

With great beauty and force we are taught here that what man can not search out, God can. It is his prerogative to search and to know the inmost heart of man. Nothing can ever be hidden from his piercing eye. Nor does he search and know men's hearts for purposes of idle curiosity, or for the mere information itself, but for the far higher and more practical purpose of awarding retribution to men according to their ways. The connection shows plainly that men's ways are here supposed to be estimated according to the purpose and intent of their heart. Their "ways," in the sense of external life, could not be judged righteously save by one who perfectly knows the heart. So the Lord judges not alone by what human eyes can see, as it is written (1 Sam. 16: 7), "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for

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man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;" or, as 1 Kings 8: 39, "Give thou to every man according to his ways, *whose heart thou knowest;* for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." No king on his throne, not the haughtiest nor proudest of mortals, can escape his scrutiny or evade his righteous judgment.——The writer and every reader of these lines must abide this one most searching and yet most righteous ordeal—the All-seeing eye and the All-wise judgment of the Omniscient King and Lord of All.

11. *As* the partridge sitteth *on eggs,* and hatcheth *them* not; *so* he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

In the first clause the English margin comes nearer the true meaning, which is, "As the partridge sitteth on eggs she has not laid"—eggs not her own, but stolen, according to the fable of the ancient naturalists. She incubates and hatches out foreign eggs, and finds to her cost that when hatched they are not homogeneous, and may not be very desirable, and will be likely to prove themselves not her own. This is the point of the comparison. Suppose they turn out to be the eggs of a viper?——So is he that getteth riches by unrighteous means. He will find that, at best, they will not stay by him, nor be as his own, and, at worst, they may "bite like a serpent and sting like an adder;" as is said here, "He shall leave them half-way through life, and at the last end will show himself to have been a fool." Note the slight distinction between what shall befall him half-way in life, and what at the latter end. He will lose them at the half-way point; at the end the evidence of his supreme folly will flash out before all eyes. What an admonition is this against the miserable folly of getting money by unrighteous means! Such gold or silver is cankered. The rust of it will be a witness against its unrighteous holder, and will eat his flesh as it were fire. It can not be well to heap such treasure together for the last days. (See James 5: 1–4.) ——Almost without doubt this passage had an eye to King Jehoiakim then reigning, but reigning with outrageous extortion, covetousness, and meanness. These charges against him are brought out yet more fully in chap. 22: 13–19.

12. A glorious high throne from the beginning *is* the place of our sanctuary.

That God rules righteously by knowing man's heart perfectly, and that he makes righteous retribution reach the king on his throne for his extortion and covetousness, combine to suggest the thought of this verse, viz., that he who sits in the place of our sanctuary has had a glorious, lofty throne from the beginning—from of old, from the depths of a past eternity. The prophet

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thinks of God as symbolically enthroned in his earthly temple, "the place of our sanctuary," yet really as filling his eternal throne in the highest heavens.

13. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, *and* they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

"Ashamed" as usual in the sense of confounded, put to confusion by being utterly disappointed and baffled in every purpose and hope. They that depart from me (God) shall be written in the dust, the sand, with only a perishable record of fame, because they have forsaken the Lord. The allusion to "the fountain," etc., carries our thoughts to chap. 2: 13: "They have forsaken" me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out for themselves broken cisterns that can not hold water. The change from the second person, "forsake *thee*," to the first person, "depart from *me*," is by no means uncommon in Hebrew. No speciality of meaning is indicated by it.

14. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou *art* my praise.

The prophet seems to think of those living waters as healing, medicinal; hence this prayer: "Heal me, for thou art my God." "My praise" means the object of my trust and of my grateful praises. His mind feels a new sense of want in view of the scoffs he meets in his prophetic work, of which he proceeds to speak.

15. Behold, they say unto me, Where *is* the word of the LORD? let it come now.

This question is asked not inquiringly and modestly, but derisively and in a skeptical spirit. In the phrase, "Let it come now," we must not emphasize "now" or take it as a particle of time, but rather as giving a tone of caustic irony, equal to—Pray let it come! Let us see it, if you please!

16. As for me, I have not hastened from *being* a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was *right* before thee.

This verse is a twofold vindication of himself; on the one hand, as toward God, and on the other, as toward the people. On the side toward God he says he has not torn himself away from the work of a prophet, has not refused to follow the manifest will of God in his pastoral work; and on the side toward the people, he

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has not vindictively longed for that sad, woful day to come, as he might have been tempted to do when they impiously and tauntingly challenged him to let it come (v. 15). As to the side toward God, see chap. 15: 16. In the last clause the exact sense of the original is given without the word "right," which stands in italics, the sense being, The utterances of my mouth were all before thee, known perfectly to thee.

17. Be not a terror unto me: thou *art* my hope in the day of evil.

He longs and prays that God would not confound him before the people, nor smite him with terror through fear of extreme violence from his enemies. His God is his only hope in the hour of sore calamity. It is therefore all of life to him to have peace and trust in his soul toward God.

18. Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed; bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

The prophet's sympathies are entirely with God, and with righteousness and truth against wickedness, and against those who in this case represented wickedness and had identified themselves with it. Hence these utterances. The issue is fully made between them and me—*them*, as thine enemies and mine; *me*, as thy prophet, as the messenger of thy fearful words of judgment. Now, therefore, let them be confounded and dismayed, and not me. Break them with a double breaking for their shocking blasphemy in which they defy Almighty God!——So ends this particular message, full of sharp, searching, solemn truth, indicating plainly that, as between the people on the one hand, and the prophet and his divine Master on the other, matters were hastening to their crisis.

19. Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;

20. And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates:

21. Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem;

22. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work; but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.

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The remaining portion of this chapter enjoins the sacred observance of the sabbath, and makes large promises on condition of obedience. Obviously obedience, in this case, is understood to imply obedience in other duties, and the spirit of obedience generally; else such promises could not attach to it. Besides, it is simply impossible that there can ever be the spirit of obedience in any one thing, and not the general spirit of obedience as to all known duty.——The prophet is to proclaim this message specially in the one gate through which the king went in and out, and then in all the gates of the city, as being the place of public resort where people "most did congregate." This "king's gate" is most probably "the gate of the fountain," leading out to the king's pool and garden, allusions to which may be seen Neh. 2: 14, and 3: 15, and 12: 17. It was by this gate that king Zedekiah escaped from the city. (Jer. 39: 4, and 2 Kings 25: 4.)——The phrase rendered, "Take heed to yourselves," is, in Hebrew, "Take heed *by* your own souls," as you value life. True, the word for soul sometimes means self; so also does it more often mean *soul*, and with a better sense here.——The injunction turns specially on bearing burdens and doing ordinary work on the sabbath. The Lord had long ago given this precept to their fathers. (Ex. 20: 8–11, and 23: 12, and 31: 13–17.) It had long been violated.

23. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.

24. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of the city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;

25. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever.

26. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and meat-offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD.

27. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

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The power of promise and of threatening combine here to enforce the duty. In the line of promise, the city shall stand forever; its kings and princes shall reign prosperously; the city and temple shall be the center of worship for a vast region round about. But if they will not hearken and obey, the Lord will kindle a fire under the gates and palaces of the city, that none shall quench. Note the striking correspondence in the terms between not bearing burdens *through the gates* and the entering in of their kings and princes in triumph and peace *through those gates;* and also the coming of the adjacent people through those same *gates* to bring their offering to Judah's temple. Such correspondence of phrases would naturally impress the thought and fix it more firmly in the mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter constitutes apparently one distinct and entire message. We reach its date only through its subject-matter. It implies so much general depravity and apostasy from God, and withal, so much persecution of his prophet, that we must locate it after the death of Josiah; and yet since it gives no hint of their captivity as present or even near, we must locate it prior to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and probably quite early in his reign. ——A potter making earthen vessels from clay is the text for this discourse, the great doctrine being that God can mold and shape the destinies of nations with equal ease and with absolute control.

1. The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
2. Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.
3. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.
4. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it.*

For the sake of more deeply impressing the truth which the Lord would teach both the prophet and the people, he directs Jeremiah to go down to the workshop of the potter and see him construct his earthen vessel. The reader need scarcely be told that this operation was probably performed then substantially as it is now, *i. e.*, upon a horizontal revolving wheel, the centrifugal force being depended on largely to give shape to the plastic clay.

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In this case his first efforts did not succeed, and he forthwith massed the same material and made a second effort, assuming of course his *right*, and showing his *power* to do any thing with his clay that he chose. Using this case as an illustration, the Lord proceeds to assert his analogous right and power to determine and shape the destiny of nations at his pleasure.——Let it be noted that this illustration is not used here to show that God makes and molds the free moral activities of men, even the free action of their will, according to his absolute pleasure, allowing to them no more responsibility or activity than the clay has in the potter's hand. This is neither asserted nor implied here. This is not by any means the point of the comparison; but the point is, as we shall soon see, that God can speak concerning a nation to pull it down and destroy it, or to build it up, and instantly the agencies of his providence prove themselves perfectly adequate for this result. With infinite ease he can say this and *do it*. The reader will specially note the bearing of this case upon the theory of interpretation held by some which assumes that where inspired prophets were commanded to *go* and to *do*, it was going and doing *in vision only*, and not in actual fact. Was not this most obviously a *fact*? Was not this man at the wheel a living, working potter, and the whole thing a scene in the outward living world? How can this be rationally doubted?

5. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
6. O house of Israel, can not I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in my hand, O house of Israel.
7. *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it:*
8. If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.
9. And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it;*
10. If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

As the clay is in the potter's hand to destroy the incipient form of one vessel and to mold it into a new and better one, so are the nations of men in God's hand, to mar and destroy, or to build up and bless at his pleasure. This is the point of the comparison. ——There is no occasion to deny that this involves various agencies of divine providence upon the free moral activities of men. Such agencies God is every day exerting, yet with no infringement upon the freedom of the human will. The phrase, "at what instant"

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(v. 7); and again (v. 9) might well be rendered, "*once* I speak to destroy;" "*again* I speak to save."——The word "evil" appears (v. 8) in its twofold sense. If that nation turn from its moral evil, sin, I will repent of the physical evil, ruin, that I thought to bring upon them.——Note that God does not represent his power as in such a sense arbitrary and sovereign that it has no respect to the moral state of his creatures. The very opposite of this is true. God shows that he exercises his agency so as to meet their moral state precisely, sparing the penitent and destroying the incorrigibly wicked.

11. Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

In applying the doctrine of this discourse, the Lord through his prophet apprises the people that he is laying his plans to bring sore calamity upon them, and therefore exhorts them to repent that they may escape its infliction and receive blessings instead.

12. And they said, There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

This subtle resort to the plea of no hope indicates a deep-seated love of sin, and a willingness to cheat one's own soul out of the blessings that God proffers, rather than be disturbed in the ways and pleasures of sin. (See notes on 2: 25.)——Some interpreters give it this turn: "There is no hope in your effort to change us; you may as well desist, for we have no thought of returning to God." I prefer the former as the primary sense. The latter, will of course follow as a result.——The last clauses of the verse, "We will walk after the stubborness of our evil heart," etc., are to be taken as words supplied for the people by the prophet or by the Lord, as truly representing their hearts; not as words quoted from their lips, for wicked men are not wont in speaking of themselves to call things thus by their right names. (See notes on the phrase "imagination of his evil heart" in chap. 3: 17.)

13. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things? the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.

14. Will *a man* leave the snow of Lebanon *which cometh* from the rock of the field? *or* shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?

The thought in these verses appears essentially in 2: 10–13. Nothing so strange, so unreasonable, so horrible, has ever been

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seen among the heathen. "The virgin of Israel" (specially expressive here because the word virgin indicates purity of character) has yet done this horrible thing. She has forsaken God, the fountain of living, snow-cold water, for filthy failing waters of her own broken cisterns.——V. 14 may be better translated without introducing the italic words of our received version, thus: "Will the snow of Lebanon fail from the rocks of my field? Or shall the waters from that distant region, cold and flowing, dry up? The implication is, No; neither will the blessings that come from God upon those who obey him.——These waters are called foreign ["from another place"], as coming from a mountain beyond the bounds of Palestine. The idea is, that Lebanon, lifting its crest into the regions of perpetual snow, supplies to the fields within its range the purest, cool, luscious water all the year, even as God supplies good for his trusting people; and it is therefore sheer folly for men to forsake God, or fear that he will fail to supply their need.

15. Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways *from* the ancient paths, to walk in paths, *in* a way not cast up;

16. To make their land desolate, *and* a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

Strange as it is, the Lord says, "My people have forgotten me," etc. "To stumble and fall out of the ancient paths," is to leave the old ways of obedience to God. "A way not cast up," is one not raised, not turnpiked and smoothed for dry and easy traveling. The result of this is to make their land a desolation and a perpetual object of scorn.

17. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

The east wind is specially violent in Judea—a figure, therefore, of fierce and fearful scattering.——The verb rendered "I will show," is the common verb *to see*, but not in the causative form, as our translators seem to have supposed. It should therefore be read, "I shall see their back, and not their face," *i. e.*, as they fly in confusion from my land. Literally, See them *as to* their back, and not their face, *i. e.*, shall see this part of their persons. Here is a tacit, but keen allusion to what is said chap. 2: 27: "My people gave me the back, and not the face," while at peace in their homes. Now, in judgment for that very sin, I shall see their back and not their face, as they are driven from their country to a long captivity.

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18. Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

The people turn against Jeremiah to counteract his mission, and to accuse him before the civil authorities, "smiting him with the tongue." They will not believe his affirmation that their priests, wise men, and prophets, were deceiving them, and really had no word from the Lord. It is plain that the people were mainly strengthened to harden themselves against the messages and influences of Jeremiah by their confidence in their own religious system and teachers—their priests, wise men, and prophets.

19. Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.

20. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, *and* to turn away thy wrath from them.

Most appropriately the prophet looks to his God for help in this emergency. He implores the Lord to hear what they say against him. He bears his case to God with confidence, because conscious of having sought to do right, faithfully and benevolently as toward both God and the people. He had done them good; shall they be allowed to requite him with evil?——"Digged a pit for my soul," means that they laid plots against his life.

21. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their *blood* by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and *be* widows; and let their men be put to death; *let* their young men *be* slain by the sword in battle.

22. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

23. Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay *me:* forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal *thus* with them in the time of thine anger.

The clause rendered "Pour out their blood by the force of the sword," is literally, "Give them over to the hand of the sword." The spirit of this prayer is due to the prophet's deep sympathy with truth and righteousness; to his sense of what the cause and honor of God demand; and to his consciousness that he had

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honestly and with much benevolent self-sacrifice labored to reclaim and save the people, albeit they were proving themselves hopelessly and madly incorrigible. Hence what else could he do? Shall he succumb and make up his mind to let wickedness rule in rampant defiance of God and of all righteousness? Nay, verily, there are sometimes imperative reasons why guilty men should be given up to exterminating judgments. Justice demands it, and even Mercy has no more to say in bar or even delay of retribution.

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter and the next are closely connected in time and occasion, the former being the prophetic message and the latter a history of some of its results in the persecution of Jeremiah and his consequent mental conflicts. The date can be determined by the points made in the prophecy. The horrid forms of the existing idolatry, as well as the persecution of the prophet, must locate it in time *after* Josiah's death, and indeed down very near to the end of the kingdom. The siege described (v. 9) must have been the final one in the time of Zedekiah. Probably this message did not precede the final siege by any long interval.——The occasion is one: its circumstances are solemnly impressive and significant. The prophet is directed to purchase an earthen bottle; to take some of the elders of the people and of the priests with him to Tophet in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and there deliver his message, predicting the utter ruin of the city, fearful slaughter, terrible famine, burying in Tophet till there shall be no more room for graves; and then to break the bottle before their eyes as a symbol of the complete though temporary destruction of the city and nation. He then returns from Tophet to the city; goes into the temple, and there repeats before all the people the substance of this fearful threatening.

1. Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and *take* of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests;

2. And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which *is* by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee:

We may suppose that the elders were selected as being the class most susceptible to good impressions. They would be men who were living under Josiah's great reformation, and who hopefully were not utterly hardened against all moral influence.——The phrase, "the east gate," should be "the potter's gate"—his shop

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being probably outside the city and not far distant. In chap. 18: 2, the prophet is directed to "*go down* to the potter's house," implying that it was on the way down into the valley of Hinnom. The gate leading to Tophet was for this reason called the potter's gate.

3. And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

4. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;

5. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake *it*, neither came *it* into my mind:

These judgments threatened, and the reasons why, viz., the great sin of idol-worship, and especially the burning of children in the worship of Baal, have been frequently declared already, but nowhere in forms more solemn and more terrible than in this chapter.——In v. 4, "They have estranged this place," means that they have made it strange to the worship of the true God, *i. e.*, have disowned him and have virtually consecrated the place to Baal, and thus made it strange and alien to God.——Inasmuch as the usual statement in regard to children burned in the worship of Baal and Moloch is, "they made them to pass through the fire" unto these gods: some have thought they were made to pass through without fatal result—simply scorched; not burned to death. But the statements here are decisive in proof that they were burned mortally. "They built the high places of Baal for the purpose of burning their sons in the fire, *whole burnt-offerings* to Baal." "They have filled the place with the *blood* of innocent ones." This can mean nothing less than burning to death great multitudes of young children. Is it strange that God should doom the nation to a most fearful ruin as the least he could do to express his detestation of these murders, and as his only hope for redeeming a remnant from idolatry, since the nation as such were demoralized by this sin past hope?

6. Therefore behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of Slaughter.

See notes on chap. 7: 31, 32.

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7. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

8. And I will make this city desolate, and a hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof.

"To make void the counsel of Judah," etc., is literally to empty it out, which can mean nothing less than that God will turn their counsel into foolishness and utterly confound their wisest schemes. So usually in God's order the cup of madness comes before the cup of doom. First wisdom and then might would fail them.—— That the city should not only be desolate but be an object of scorn to all passers by, indicates that the Gentile nations had some general knowledge of the guilt and crimes which had provoked God to these fearful visitations of his wrath. A great city and a strong nation blotted out from among the nations and lying desolate for seventy years, must be in any age of the world a fearfully solemn and impressive moral lesson, testifying before even heathen minds to the wrath of their gods. Must we not suppose that to some extent they knew the ingratitude, the rebellion against their own God, the horrible immoralities and the murders of innocent children which had called forth his vengeance?

9. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

This very doom—parents eating the flesh of their offspring—had been predicted long before as Jehovah's curse upon them for these sins. (See Lev. 26: 29, and Deut. 28: 53.) "Thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall straiten thee." This siege continued one year and a half (Jer. 52: 4–7), "until the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land." In his "Lamentations" (4: 10), the prophet has recorded the fulfillment of this dreadful doom: "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people." Verily the hand of retributive justice was in this, that parents who had thrust their own sons and daughters into the fire to burn them to death for Baal and Moloch should be straitened by war, siege, and famine, to boil and eat their own children! Did not the form

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of this judgment remind them of their awful sin? This is the usual way of God in his retributions for sin in this world.

10. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,

11. And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as *one* breaketh a potter's vessel, that can not be made whole again: and they shall bury *them* in Tophet, till *there be* no place to bury.

No sensible reader will doubt that this was to be done in fact, not in vision, but really before the eyes of those uninspired men who were not in the world of prophetic vision, even though a prophet might sometimes be. The thing was done for symbolic purposes to illustrate the breaking of the nation to pieces so that no human power could gather the fragments and reunite them into a new nationality. Broken pottery is precisely the best symbol of a thing whose breaking can not be healed.

12. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and *even* make this city as Tophet:

13. And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods.

The whole city should be defiled even as Josiah had defiled Tophet, to put it forever beyond any further use as a place of resort for the horrid rites of Baal and Moloch. The people of the city had burned incense on the roofs of their houses to all the host of heaven: now those very houses go down under an avalanche of fire and ruin.——For a more full account of Tophet, see notes on chap. 7: 31, 32.

14. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD'S house; and said to all the people,

15. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

Jeremiah now returns from Tophet and recites the substance of this prediction of ruin in the ears of all the people in the tem-

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ple. The people are repeatedly apprised that these judgments are coming, and must come because they are hardening their heart and refusing to hear the words of the Lord.——Every thing here indicates that the great crisis is at hand. The threatened judgments have nearly reached the climax of horrors. Their very recital makes one's ears tingle! What must the dread reality have been? Verily, the Lord is a God of judgment; and hardened sinners have cause to tremble before him!

CHAPTER XX.

For the general scope of this chapter, see introduction to chapter 19. This chapter is a continuation of that.

1. Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who *was* also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

2. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that *were* in the high gate of Benjamin, which *was* by the house of the LORD.

This Pashur was not the man who bears the same name in 21: 1, this being the son of Immer; that, the son of Melchiah. This man was head-prefect of the temple, the priest who had the general supervision there. Our version does not imply that he himself heard Jeremiah speak. The original does imply this.——This may have been the first case of personal violence to the prophet. The "stocks" were an instrument contrived not merely to confine the person, but to torture it as well. The original word implies this—a wrench, made to twist and distort the body out of any natural, easy posture. Ancient Jewish authorities present somewhat various opinions concerning it. Gesenius gives the result of the best judgment, defining it, "a wrench;" "stocks;" "a wooden frame in which the feet, hands, and neck of the person were so fastened that his body was held bent."

3. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib.

After one day's confinement and torture, Pashur brought Jeremiah forth. Undaunted by this torture, Jeremiah announces to his tormentor a new and terrible word from the Lord for him personally. The name *Pashur* signifies "security round about." The Lord does not give him that name, certainly not any longer,

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but "Magor-missabib," meaning "fear round about." This new name was significant of his doom.

4. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold *it:* and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

Instead of reading, "I will make thee a terror to thyself," etc., Maurer, one of the most acute and judicious critics, favors this: "I will consign thee to terror for thyself and for thy friends;" I will doom thee to unceasing alarm and dread, and will inspire the same feeling of terror in all thy friends also—a terrible doom!

5. Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labors thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

6. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thy house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

"Strength" is properly wealth, riches. "Labors" are the fruits, the results of labor. Pashur had been deeply responsible for the delusion and obduracy of the people, having made use of his high position to prophesy to them lies in the name of the Lord. Hence he had richly deserved this judgment.

7. O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

The remaining verses of this chapter are personal to Jeremiah, recording his own experiences, his prayer, and his language addressed to God. In order to judge him fairly, we must bear in mind that, in addition to the unceasing trial of failure in his efforts to reclaim and save the people, in addition also to scorn and reproach from every quarter, he had now spent one day in torture, and came forth only to confront his arch persecutor with another message of terror from the Lord, which we may suppose provoked the ire of Pashur yet more fearfully. But however this may be, the nervous system of the prophet was overtaxed, perhaps irritable, and his spirits ready to sink utterly.——The translation, "deceive," in the clause "Thou, Lord, hast deceived me," is unfortunate. It puts into his mouth a grave charge against the Lord

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his God, which the words he used do not naturally imply, and which the context does not admit. The true meaning is, "Thou didst *persuade me*," *i. e.*, to undertake the prophetic work, quite against my wish and preference, but I yielded; "Thou wert stronger than I, and didst prevail," for in this struggle I could not decide against thy will, expressed so clearly and so strongly. Yet he goes on to say, "Although I entered upon this work only under the strong pressure of thy command, I have been in derision all the time; every one mocks me."

8. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

Instead of "For since I spake," I render "For as often as I speak,"—*i. e.*, in every message I deliver from thee, I am compelled to cry out of violence and oppression threatened or enforced against myself, for, as to me, the word of the Lord is a reproach and a derision every day. He means that every message he bears to the people excites their opposition and compels him to cry out of oppression. He gets nothing but abuse, violence, and scorn. ——Some have given the verse this turn: "As often as I speak for God, I have only this one perpetual message from him," *i. e.*, violence and spoil upon the people; hence the people will not bear it, and always treat me with abuse and reproach. The former, rather than the latter, I on the whole approve as being more in harmony with the strain of the context, and also with the logical connection between the parts of this verse indicated by "because."

9. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*.

Then the thought comes up (the temptation, shall we not call it?) "I will prophesy no more; I will not name the Lord to this people again. But "*it*"—the divine impulse—the present hand of God upon me—"was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones"—a most vivid account of the intense pressure of his convictions of duty and of his sense of a present God pressing him on in his work.——There is no Hebrew term corresponding to "his word." This translation of the passage is not specially bad, yet I judge that he thinks of a conviction of duty and a sense of God's claims and demands rather than of any particular "*word*." ——He adds, "I was weary with restraining myself," *i. e.*, with trying to hold myself back "from duty by thus resisting the Lord," and "I *could not*," *i. e.*, could not do it. "Stay" does not so well express his thought, which is, I could not oppose God and refuse longer to do my duty.

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10. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, *say they*, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, *saying*, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

This verse is naturally connected with v. 8, rather than with v. 9, taking up the same line of thought which is there pursued, the trials he constantly endures in his work. "I heard the slanders of many."——The clause, "Fear on every side," (Magor-missabib), may be resolved into the sentence, "Fear was on every side;" or it may be understood as the taunt of his enemies, repeating in scorn the phrase which so often fell, either in full or abbreviated, from his lips. I incline to the latter.——"Report," etc., means, denounce him; bring charges against him; we will repeat and indorse them.——"All my familiars," *i. e.*, "all my natural friends," those who from their position and relations to me should have been my friends. Literally, "Every man of my peace." ——The next word I take to be not the predicate of the sentence, but a further description in apposition, thus; not, "Watch for my halting," but every man of my peace, *guardians of my side*, my natural protectors; all these say, "Peradventure he will be enticed away from his God and his duty, or into some misstep by the aid of which we can ruin him, and so we will prevail against him and get our revenge.——The terribly bitter thing to the heart of this loving prophet was that those who stood in the relations of friendship and protection to him had turned so cruelly against him.

11. But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty terrible One; therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: *their* everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

12. But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, *and* seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I opened my cause.

13. Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil-doers.

These verses are in the strain of joyous exulting faith in the Lord God. The Lord had promised him, in the outset, that he would be with him as a mighty and formidable One. (See 1: 8, 18, 19.) Now he sings of deliverance, and calls on others to join him in his triumphant song. In the phrase, "The soul of the poor," the poor one is not the moneyless, but the *weak*; he who by position and relations has no powerful helper.

14. Cursed *be* the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

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15. Cursed *be* the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee, making him very glad.

16. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noon-tide;

17. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb *to be* always great *with me.*

18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

Some critics noticing the singular contrast between the strain of these last five verses and that of the three next preceding, insist that these do not naturally belong here; that they are a fragment of some song of complaint composed and representing the prophet's state of feeling at some other time. Of this criticism, so far as concerns the literary history of this passage, none of us know any thing. Here the passage stands, and the presumption is that it belongs here. As to its striking dissimilarity to vs. 11–13, the thing to be said is this: It comes of the frailties of human nature that Christian experience should have very dissimilar phases; that frail flesh, weak nerves, and little faith, have moments for asserting their terrible sway, not of *right*, but of *fact;* and that it is simple historic truth to give utterance to their impressions and voices. Jeremiah and Elijah had seasons of being strong in the Lord, and also seasons of being sadly weak in the Lord, or rather weak through not being just then very much *in the Lord*, but rather in the flesh, and under the control of a prostrate nervous system. Elijah one day faces down eight hundred idol prophets, and sees them laid dead at his feet; but the tax on his nervous energy was exhausting, and the next day he fears a single woman, and flies for his life, and even begs that God will take him out of the world.——These verses are a sad record of the spirit of Jeremiah; for, after making all the allowance we can for these words of his on the score of oriental usage, and on the score of their manifest imitation of Job's imprecations upon the day of his birth (Job 3), we can not bring them into harmony with the sweet spirit of trust in God's love and universal providence, which it is the Christian's privilege and glory to maintain through every possible extreme of earthly trial. Very probably Jeremiah had it in mind to compare his case tacitly with that of Job, and to say within himself, If Job had occasion to utter such imprecations upon the day of his birth, and upon all the parties who either had or might have had any agency there, fully as much, or more, have I; but this view of the case, though it may suggest the occasion, fails to justify the spirit of such words.

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CHAPTER XXI.

The circumstances which gave rise to the message from the Lord contained in this chapter are clearly given. They fix its date proximately; to the reign of Zedekiah certainly; and probably to the precise point when Nebuchadrezzar approached the city to besiege it for its final fall. This was in Zedekiah's ninth year. His entire reign was about eleven years; the duration of the siege was one and a half years. (See Jer. 52: 1, 4–7.) Hence chronologically this chapter should come in between chapters 37 and 38. Some have thought that the recurrence of the name "Pashur," v. 1, (compare 20: 1) occasioned its location here.——Zedekiah manifestly had more regard for the Lord's prophet and for the Lord himself than Jehoiakim had, and was a less wicked and less contemptible man. Probably he was more weak than wicked; or rather, was extremely weak, but less wicked than the two kings that preceded him. He was alarmed at the approach of Nebuchadrezzar's army, and sent men to Jeremiah to inquire in his behalf of the Lord, and also, it would seem, to solicit his prayers that God would interpose for the salvation of the city as he had often done in ancient times. The Lord's answer through his prophet was very categorical, decisive, and appalling, still leaving an open door however for hope on the one sole condition that the king and his people would thoroughly repent and reform their ways. Even at this late hour salvation was possible on these only righteous conditions.

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

2. Inquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

"Dealing with us according to all his wondrous works" means, after the manner of his former marvelous deliverances of his people, *e. g.*, in the times of Hezekiah and Sennacherib, 2 Kings 18, and 19; of Jehoshaphat as in 2 Chron. 20, and often in the days of Joshua and the Judges.

3. Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah:

4. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are* in your hands,

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wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and *against* the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city.

5. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.

6. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence.

7. And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Every word in this reply is stern and fearful. It must have been terribly appalling. That is a fearful point in every sinner's history where mercy "reaches its appointed bound" and fully "turns to judgment." But there is and must be such a point in the history of every incorrigible sinner. O! would he only believe it before it comes, and let the fear thereof be a salutary admonition to make peace with God in season!——To "turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands," is to make them powerless against the foe; perhaps to make them recoil upon yourselves. Not only would the Lord make the arms of the Jews powerless and bring the Chaldean king and his hosts within the very city to fight and destroy, but he himself would fight against them with outstretched hand and strong arm, and in great wrath. How terrible!

8. And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

9. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

10. For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD; it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

This gives the people to understand distinctly that the city is doomed to destruction, and that their only hope of personal safety

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lies in going out and giving themselves up to the Chaldeans. This is a clear illustration of the language elsewhere used of the moral choice which the Lord sets before men between the way of life and the way of death, *e. g.*, Deut. 30: 15–20, and Josh. 24: 14–24.

11. And touching the house of the king of Judah, *say*, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

12. O house of David, thus saith the LORD, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver *him that is* spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

This seems to imply that the doom of king Zedekiah, then on the throne of David, would be ameliorated personally if he would rule justly, execute judgment, and deliver the spoiled from the hand of his oppressor. The morning hours were devoted to hearing causes judicially—very appropriately.

13. Behold, I *am* against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, *and* rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

14. But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

The clause "O inhabitant of the valley and rock of the plain," refers to and describes the city of Jerusalem, addressed in the feminine (Heb.) as cities commonly were; said to be "of the valley" because she lay encompassed by hills in the distance. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people" (Ps. 125: 2). She is called "the rock of the plain" with reference also to her physical conformation. The description alludes to her natural strength which made her self-confident in regard to her assailants. The Lord assured her that he was against her, and that her natural strength could avail her nothing.

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CHAPTER XXII.

The precise date of this important chapter is not given in terms, but must be drawn from its contents and allusions. Who was the king then sitting on his throne when Jeremiah went with this message as in vs. 1–9? I suppose him to have been Jehoiakim; also, that v. 10 refers to Josiah as "the dead," and to his third son Shallum, alias Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23: 31–33, and 2 Chron. 36: 1–4) as the one that "goeth away" to die in captivity in Egypt. Then the king upon whom the woe is pronounced for his injustice, extortion, and proud display, is Jehoiakim (vs. 13–19.) The remaining portion (vs. 20–30) relates to Jeconiah (alias Coniah), son and successor of Jehoiakim, who after a three months' reign was carried captive to Babylon and died there after not less than thirty-seven years of captivity. This passage must have been of later date, but comes in here because its strain is so analogous to what precedes (compare v. 3 with 21: 12), and because it stands in the same relation to the general course of thought both in this chapter and the next. Here (in this chapter) the Lord disowns and dooms the wicked kings who have seduced his people into sin and led them on to ruin; there (in the next chapter) he puts forth his power to redeem his people; promises a new king and shepherd who should rule righteously and under whom they should find salvation.

1. Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,

2. And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:

As one who must not fear the face of the proudest or most wicked of monarchs on his throne, Jeremiah must go to the king's house and there proclaim this word. There were things in this message that were keenly cutting and humiliating, but they were also fearfully true, and being true, they should be said even though the guilty man who had done them were a king on his throne. It was pertinent to remind this wicked Jehoiakim that he sat on the throne of David, for David was in an important sense the founder of this kingdom. He had greatly enlarged it; subdued its enemies, both those who lived within its bounds (the Philistines,) and those who lived beyond, *e. g.*, the Syrians, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Arab tribes. Moreover, David had wrested Jerusalem from its heathen occupants and built it up for his royal city and for the temple of God; and not least, he had placed his name at the head of those kings who ruled in the fear of God and after his own heart. In all these respects he had left his name and his throne a sacred legacy to his sons and sons'

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sons to the latest generation—a model of piety, a rule of life for all succeeding kings on that throne, and a standing motive to administer the government on like principles of justice and piety.

3. Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

With admirable clearness and point the one supreme purpose of all civil government, and consequently its prime duties and obligations, are here set forth, viz., to execute judgment and righteousness, to secure even-handed justice and equity between man and man; to shield the weak against the strong, and all classes against oppression and wrong. It was for these purposes that God ordained a civil government over his chosen people. These are the ends he aims to secure in his sanction of civil government in all human society. Rulers should be "a terror to evil-doers and a praise to them that do well." In the present case he promises, provided they will rule thus, to continue the succession of kings on David's throne indefinitely long, and with great prosperity. "The riding in chariots and on horses" may be a tacit allusion to the reign of Solomon which began so well in the matter of just and wise ruling, and rose to such splendor.

5. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

6. For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou *art* Gilead unto me, *and* the head of Lebanon: *yet* surely I will make thee a wilderness, *and* cities *which* are not inhabited.

7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons; and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast *them* into the fire.

If Jehoiakim and his court will not hear, God dooms them to utter desolation. Nothing could be more solemn than this fearful oath, in which the Lord God swears by himself: "As truly as I live, I will execute this sentence of remediless doom!" It would be in vain for the king and his princes to say, It can not be that God will destroy his own temple and his own city, and let his

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name be blotted out from among the nations of men. It would be all in vain for them to flatter themselves that they were so identified with the house, the worship, the name, and the honor of God on earth, that they could have nothing to fear from a foreign enemy, no such thing to fear as the ruin of their city and kingdom. To meet this vain conceit, the Lord says here to the house of the king of Judah, "Thou art Gilead to me, and the summit-crown of Lebanon"—things precious and glorious in themselves; yet IF I will not make thee a wilderness, and thy cities void of population! This strongest form of affirmation, when filled out, would read, If I do not this, then I am not God! *If* I fail of this, it will be because I have not power to do it! This Hebrew mode of expressing the solemn affirmation is not usually translated literally into our English; yet the sense of it would be readily taken in our language, by placing a very strong emphasis on the word "if."——"They shall cut down thy choice cedars," looks back to the conception of the house of Judah as "the head of Lebanon."

8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbor, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshiped other gods, and served them.

After Jerusalem and the nation of Judah should be laid in ruins, many other nations would pass along by her ancient heaps of desolation, and inquire, "Why did the Lord send such ruin on this once great city?" The answer brings out the great sin for which this judgment came—their utter apostasy from their covenant with their God, and their inveterate idolatry.

10. Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; *but* weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.

11. For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more.

12. But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

There can be no doubt that here the dead king whom they need not bemoan is Josiah, over whose death the mourning was exceedingly great. (See 2 Chron. 35: 24, 25, and Zech. 12: 11.) This Shallum who went into captivity was his third son, who was his immediate successor, and who reigned but three months, and was then deposed by Pharaoh-nechoh and taken with him into Egypt

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to return no more. He bears the name of Jehoahaz in the brief records of Kings and Chronicles; was evidently preferred by the people (see 2 Chron. 36: 1) before Jehoiakim his elder brother, and apparently was a much more worthy man, or at least was less contemptible. For him they might fitly mourn. It was an object with Jeremiah to make the king and his princes feel that it was a fearful thing to be borne away into captivity under a cruel foreign king. This was their own impending doom. The prophet intimates that this doom would be far more terrible to them than to die as the good Josiah died.

13. Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; *that* useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

14. That saith, I will build me a wide house, and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and *it is* ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion!

15. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest *thyself* in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, *and* then *it was* well with him?

16. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then *it was* well *with him: was* not this to know me? saith the LORD.

17. But thine eyes and thy heart *are* not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do *it*.

This woe does not begin with naming Jehoiakim, the king then on the throne. The prophet first describes him in points too plain to be mistaken. He then addresses him (v. 15), and finally (v. 18) gives his name and God's solemn message to him announcing his terrible doom.——The repeated exhortations to Jehoiakim to do justice, to execute judgment, to abstain from oppression (see above, vs. 3, 4, and chap. 7: 5–9), plainly intimate the general character of his reign in these respects. The history gives us a hint of this in its brief notice of his heavy exactions of tribute from the people (2 Kings 23: 33, 35): "Pharaoh-nechoh put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold." "And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but" [he gave nothing from his own princely estate, nothing from the accumulated wealth of the crown] "he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it to Pharaoh-nechoh." This very particular statement plainly implies that the king laid this burden too exclusively upon the people, and made their taxation cruelly severe, while he bore no share of it himself. In our passage the

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prophet represents him as lavishing the wealth of the nation upon his palace at this very time when his people were crushed with taxation—extorting labor from them without wages, and building his house by unrighteousness. This was both mean and wicked, and we instinctively honor the Lord for frowning upon it and dooming this proud tyrant to a dishonored grave as a fit retribution for building his costly and magnificent palace with coerced, unpaid labor in the midst of the general suffering of an overtaxed people. In v. 15, the Hebrew reads, not precisely "closest thyself in cedar," but "dost rival or emulate in cedar," *i. e.*, rival all other kings; seek to outdo them all in the costliness and splendor of thy palace. ——Will this guarantee to thee a long and prosperous reign? Far otherwise. "Did not thy father eat and drink," enjoying the good things of life quite sufficiently, and yet without any such extortion and wasteful expenditure as this of thine? Did not he do justice and judgment and thus ensure prosperity? Do not you, his recreant son, know that he judged the cause of the poor and needy, and that so judging and so doing it was well with him? And is not this administration of justice—done withal in kindness and compassion—"to *know me*, saith the Lord?" Is any thing else *knowing me*? Will not every king who really knows me rule thus? Does not all that you know of God lead to such ruling and reigning, and demand it of you who sit on my throne?——V. 17 charges that king Jehoiakim set his eye and heart on nothing else but covetousness (*i. e.*, grasping unjust gain) even at the cost of innocent blood, extortion, oppression, and violence. With covetousness as his ruling passion, to compass his ends he spared no man's rights or even life. With the absolute power of the throne at his command, there would scarcely be any limit to his extortions, his violence, and his murders—a most revolting picture of meanness and of guilt! Is it wonderful that the Lord doomed him to infamy?——This man was one of the sons of the good Josiah. He had scorned that illustrious example; had set at naught every principle of his father's excellent reign. In the face of light and truth and of the best instruction, he had given his heart to the foulest wickedness of which a king could be guilty. So let him die dishonored and despised!

18. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!

19. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Let us note the striking contrast between the great mourning over the death of the father Josiah, and the utter absence of even one note of grief over the burial of his godless, graceless, guilty son! Nobody shall say over him, "Ah his glory!" There was no glory lost there to be deplored! As a dead ass is dragged out

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of the city unwept, cast forth only to get the loathsome carcass out of the way, so should Jehoiakim die and all the living be glad thereof!——The history says this of his latter end, that "Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon" (2 Chron. 36: 6). Precisely where or when he died, nobody cared enough to give the world its record.

20. Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed.

21. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; *but* thou saidst, I will not hear. This *hath been* thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.

22. The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.

23. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!

As said above in the introduction to this chapter, this last portion (vs. 20–30) refers to Jeconiah, otherwise called Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim. In the first four verses he is not brought out by name [Jehoiakim was not at first; see vs. 13–17], but the manner in which he is introduced in v. 24 shows that these four vs. (20–23) refer to him. Indeed, they can refer to none other, for Jehoiakim has gone to his dishonored grave.——The spirit of this passage (addressed apparently to Jerusalem) is, "Go to the top of the high mountain to mourn and wail," that thy voice may resound throughout all the land; for all thy friends ("lovers") are destroyed.——"Cry from the passages," should be, "Cry from *Abarim*"—the proper name of the great mountain chain east of the Jordan, of which Mount Nebo was a prominent peak. So understood, the clause is parallel with the former, "Go up to Lebanon," etc.——The Lord had spoken to this young king in friendly warning while he was prosperous, but he would not hear. Indeed, from his youth he had persisted in this wicked course, regardless of the voice of God. Of necessity this must ensure his ruin. In v. 22, "pastures" (as it is in some editions) should be read "*pastors*," shepherds; here in the sense of thy princes, rulers, whom the wind of divine judgment should destroy. The Hebrew word here is the participle of the usual verb for acting the part of a shepherd. The same word occurs in the same sense in chap. 23: 1, 2, 4.——"Lovers" (as before v. 20) in the sense of dearest friends, and essentially parallel with "pastors." The description of the king as "a dweller in Lebanon," and as "making his nest in the cedars," looks toward that stately palace built by his father (vs. 13–15), which rivaled the proudest of regal palaces in its cedars (v. 15). Shall his nestling so high in the cedar-tops save

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him from a fearful fall? Nay verily! Rather, all the more shall he fall for the very pride and oppression which that palace represents!——"How gracious" means, How *much to be pitied* shalt thou be in the hour of thy travail pains!

24. *As* I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;

25. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand *of them* whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

Here we have the name of the royal personage referred to in the four preceding verses, and throughout this passage (vs. 20–30). He bears this name, Coniah, only here (vs. 24, 28, and in chap. 37: 1). He takes the name of Jeconiah 1 Chron. 3: 16, 17, and Jer. 24: 1, and 27: 20, and 28: 4, and 29: 2; and the name of Jehoiachin in 2 Kings 24: 8, 12, and 2 Chron. 36: 9, and elsewhere. The full name, whether Jehoiachin or Jeconiah, means "*whom Jehovah appoints;*" but the prophet, in our chapter, strikes off the part taken from the name Jehovah, probably to indicate that, having proved himself unworthy, he is no longer a king appointed of God.——The signet-ring on the right hand would represent whatever was peculiarly valuable and precious. Though Coniah was in some respects as valuable and dear to the Lord as a signet-ring, yet for his sins the Lord would pluck him off his finger, *i. e.*, hurl him from his throne, and send him into captivity. ——The history of this young but wicked king shows that he was taken captive to Babylon; that he lay there at least thirty-seven years in captivity; was then brought forth from prison on the accession of Evil-merodach, and treated with princely kindness. This Chaldean king reigned but two years. We hear no more of Jehoiachin. (See 2 Kings 25: 27–30, and Jer. 52: 31–34.) Ezekiel, a fellow-captive, dates from the years of his captivity. (See Ezek. 1: 2, and 8: 1, etc.)

26. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.

27. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

Special notice is taken of his mother because he was yet very young and she was queen-regent. Her name is given Nehushta (2 Kings 24: 8). The account of his capture makes his mother prominent (2 Kings 24: 12, 15). It is generally conceded that the young king was eight years old, as in 2 Chron. 36: 9, and not eighteen, as the passage 2 Kings 24: 8 makes it by some error

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of the text. Both the son and the mother were doomed to die in the land of their captivity and never return to the land of their birth and of their earnest love.

28. *Is* this man Coniah a despised broken idol? *is he* a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

These questions imply an affirmative answer. They are put to raise the inquiry in the reader's mind why so dire a doom fell on a Jewish king. The word rendered "idol," in the phrase, "despised broken idol," seems to mean simply an earthen vessel, a cheap thing at best, and when broken quite worthless and fit only to be cast out and despised. In this view, the next clause is strictly parallel (as it should be); a vessel in which no one has any pleasure or feels any interest, save to get it out of the way. It has been thought that this manner of speaking denoted at least a shade of sympathy and commiseration in the prophet's mind for his untimely fate. Perhaps so; at least the prophet does not hold him up to execration as he did his father Jehoiakim.

29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.

30. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man *that* shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

The repetition of the word "earth" has no other significance save emphasis.——This young king was doomed to be childless, not in the sense of having no offspring, but of having none to succeed him on the throne of David and to rule any more in Judah. That he had sons appears in 1 Chron. 3: 17, 18 and in Matt. 1: 12. In him the royal line became extinct—a fact pregnant with significance in this connection, opening the way for the subject of the next chapter, the new king whom God would raise up for a shepherd to his people (23: 5, 6).

CHAPTER XXIII.

This chapter stands in the closest relations of thought to the preceding. The succession of wicked kings, the three recreant sons of Josiah, brought to view, delineated and doomed there, are here referred to as "the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep on the Lord's pasture-field." They are doomed to fearful judgments; but the Lord in his loving faithfulness will yet save his

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people, and for this end will raise up a righteous King in the person of the Messiah, under whose just sway the people will have salvation, instead of such judgments as their wicked kings had brought down upon them. This is the course of thought which introduces and illustrates this signal prophecy of the Messiah (vs. 5, 6) and of his blessed reign (vs. 7, 8).——The remaining portion of the chapter (vs. 9–40) treats of the false prophets whose influence had been and then was so pernicious to the people.

1. Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

That the word "pastors" is applied to the kings that sat on David's throne, comes naturally from the fact that David himself was taken from the care of his father's flocks and put to the care of the Lord's people. He was in more senses than one the *shepherd-king*, *i. e.*, a king who rose from shepherd-life to the life of king, and who made that kingly life a fine example of pastoral care and influence over the Lord's covenant people. In the light of his example suggested by this very term, it was most fit that the direst woes should fall on those recreant kings recently named and described, who had destroyed or scattered into foreign lands the sheep who were on the Lord's pasture-land in Canaan. The main thoughts in this passage (v. 1–8) are found even more fully expanded in Ezek. 34.

2. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

"The Lord God of Israel" is the appropriate designation of Jehovah in such a connection as this. He appears here in glorious promise and prophecy as the deliverer of his people, because he is by covenant the Lord God of Israel—of Israel as a whole people irrespective of the revolt and loss of the ten tribes—of Israel as the offspring of him who was a prince with God. Here, as elsewhere in this prophet, we may notice the sharp turn on the word "visit." Because ye have not *visited* my flock to look after them and supply their wants, I will *visit upon* you the retribution so righteously deserved.——The phrase, "the evil of your doings," finds its original in the standard threatening recorded Deut. 28: 20: "Because of the wickedness of thy doings whereby thou hast forsaken me."

3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

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4. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

This gathering of the remnant and setting up shepherds over them, must be understood to refer mainly to the great ingatherings of the Christian age and to the pastoral work of the Messiah himself, brought out more distinctly in vs. 5–8. Lesser and prior restorations, like that from Babylon under Zerubbabel, may be included as coming under the same covenant love and faithfulness, but can not by any means be regarded as exhausting the significance of this promise. The "fruitfulness and increase" of the restoration from Babylon was relatively small; the security ("they shall fear no evil," etc.,) came then very far short of realizing the full import of this promise.

5. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord," I take to be a strong asseveration, apprising us that other days are to come, all unlike the past, pregnant with rich and precious good for the people of God.——"I will raise up unto David," implies that this event will fulfill his promises made to David, and will redeem a pledge which stands recorded as given to him. There was the more reason for referring here to this promise because the names, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, were both taken from that remarkable promise found 2 Sam. 7: 12: "I will set up (Jehoiakim, meaning *whom the Lord sets up*) thy seed after thee, and I will establish (Jehoiachin, whom the Lord establishes) his kingdom." But in the case of those ungodly sons of the good Josiah, the significance of this promise signally failed. Josiah no doubt hoped that these sons would realize the fulfillment of the precious ideas involved in these names, but their wickedness frustrated every such hope. The Lord, however, will raise up a king who will most entirely fulfill that original promise to David.——"Branch" is not precisely a limb of a tree, but rather a *shoot* or sprout which springs up from the root and becomes itself the tree. The word appears earliest in Isa. 4: 2, and is said of the Messiah elsewhere, *e. g.*, Jer. 33: 15, Zech. 3: 8, and 6: 12.——He would be *righteous* in broad distinction from the savagely unrighteous kings, brought to view in the previous chapter, especially Jehoiakim, who was unsurpassed in shameless injustice and oppression. [The same word is used of the Messiah in Isa. 53: 11, and Zech. 9: 9.]——He would be a great king put in charge over this whole world to rule it, for the interests of righteousness and salvation, "head over all things to his church" for the sake of subserving their interests and promoting the great work of saving this world from its sin and ruin.——"He shall

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reign and *be wise*" (rather than "prosper.") The being wise is the primary and leading sense; the prosperity is a secondary result. He will ensure judgment and justice in the earth all unlike the base administration of the later Jewish kings under whom oppression was rampant and justice was trampled under foot. Such is the magnificent description given here of Messiah's reign. The terms and phrases in this description are naturally drawn from regal life, and are especially antithetic to the reigns of those apostate Jewish kings, because the entire promise stands in contrast with their reign and its ruinous results upon the people of God.

6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Judah and Israel must here be thought of as representing the true Israel of God according to Galatians 6: 16: "Peace be upon them, even upon the Israel of God." This means the Messiah's kingdom as enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles, and lifted to a higher plane of spiritual life by the fuller revelation of God through his incarnate Son, and by the mission of his Spirit. In its terms, and indeed in its spirit as well, this promise ("In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely") refers to that most sublime description of Jehovah's care for his people, seen in Deut. 33: 26–29: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky." "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, 'Destroy them.'" "*Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.*" . . . . . "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord"—"the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thine excellency!" So blessed shall be the future reign of our great King Messiah, when his gospel shall have unbounded sway, and his love shall rule in all hearts without a rival, and unto the real holiness in heart and life of his whole people! Then Zion's King shall bear this name, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. In Hebrew usage names are significant, and especially names that are given for a definite purpose, on solemn occasions, and in a manner peculiarly marked and distinctive. Hence the significance of this name becomes a grave question, around which cluster the highest interests.——In determining this significance, it is manifest that we ought to be governed by the general course of thought which obtains throughout the passage. And, further, we are bound to give it a sense which will not conflict with that which we must give to precisely the same name, "the Lord our Righteousness," when we find it applied (33: 16) to the Lord's people—to Jerusalem as the mother of us all.——Guided by these principles, we must reject the interpretation which finds in this word "righteous-

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ness" the idea of Christ's perfect obedience and merit, as constituting a fund or stock which is transferred to his people, and becomes theirs by substitution, *i. e.*, by being accounted theirs irrespective of their own personal righteousness of heart and life. This idea need not come under special discussion here, farther than to say that it has no sympathy with the context; is altogether foreign from the course of thought in this passage; can by no means be taken as the sense of the same phrase in chap. 33: 16; and therefore can not be found here without violence and caprice.——For the same reasons we must reject the analogous construction which finds in this word "righteousness," as applied here to the Messiah, the idea of justification in the sense of the forgiveness of sin, by which sinners become right before the divine law. This doctrine is amply taught in the New Testament; but the fact of its being true, and taught there, does not prove that it is taught here. The course of thought here holds us to the idea of a just and righteous regal administration, in the strongest contrast with the cruelly unjust reign of the last Jewish kings on David's throne. It looks also to the resulting peace, prosperity, and salvation under King Messiah, which stand over against the resulting wickedness and national ruin which came upon the nation through those wicked kings.——Another grave question arises here, viz., whether the name Jehovah is here given to the Messiah in such a sense that the fact can be legitimately used as proof of his divinity. Does the name here truly assume that he is Jehovah of Hosts? The question I raise here is not whether the Messiah *is* truly divine, "God over all," but whether this passage proves it. This question I am constrained to answer in the negative; especially because the Hebrew usage of incorporating the names of the Deity into proper names of persons and things, does not sustain or even admit the affirmative. Thus, *e. g.*, Moses built an altar after his defeat of Amalek, and called it Jehovah-nissi, meaning Jehovah my banner; but certainly not in the sense that the altar *is* Jehovah the Eternal God (Ex. 17: 15). Jacob gives his altar (Gen. 33: 20) the analogous name "*El-elohe-Israel*," God, the God of Israel; but this should not be regarded as proving that the altar is God, and has the attributes of God. The name Zedekiah means, the righteousness of God—scarcely differing in thought from the name before us, the Lord our Righteousness. This means, he under whom the Lord gives righteousness to his people. But more decisive still is the fact that this identical name, *Jehovah-tsidkenu*, is given (Jer. 33: 16) to Jerusalem or Judah, representing the people of God. Now we can not admit this name as proof that God's people are divine in the sense of being God. Hence we can not logically and safely admit this name of the Messiah to be proof that he is truly Jehovah. That he *is* really God, I have no doubt. There are texts that legitimately prove it. All I have to say on the subject here is, that this passage is not one of that class. But the passage does prove that Jesus the Messiah will fully realize the idea of a

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righteous and wise, and therefore prosperous and glorious King of his people. In him the spirit of Ps. 72 will have its ample and illustrious manifestation: "He shall judge the Lord's people with righteousness, and his poor with judgment." "The mountains shall bring peace to his people, and the little hills by righteousness." "He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth," etc. His reign will be one of munificent blessings, filling all the earth with peace and love, bearing joy to all lands, and bringing to the Most High God a rich and perpetual tribute of praise and glory.

7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

8. But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

See chapter 16: 14, 15, and notes there. The sentiment here must be that this deliverance and the consequent blessedness of it will surpass and eclipse the exodus from Egyptian bondage, and hence this will take the place of that as a standing witness and illustration of God's redeeming power and mercy. That they should be thought of as coming back from the north country to their own land is the natural result of the antithesis between the fruits of those last wicked reigns of the kings of Judah, and of this one all-righteous, wise, and prosperous reign of King Messiah. This must needs undo the evils of that; this must restore Zion from the ruin produced by those wicked kings. The wickedness of those vile kings caused the captivity; the righteousness of this good King Messiah must cause the corresponding restoration from captivity. The force of this antithesis naturally determines the form of the expression here; and yet we should greatly err if we were to assume that the Messiah's work consisted in precisely the literal undoing of those evils, *i. e.*, in restoring Judah from her captivity, and in little or nothing else. This mode of interpretation would teach that the main if not the only work of the Messiah would be to restore the Jews to Palestine and to reëstablish Judaism forever. Paul held an entirely different view of Christ's great mission. The New Testament teaches the very opposite of this. The Apostolic Church fought this Judaizing notion to the very death during at least one whole generation;—fought it with argument; fought it with the authority of inspiration; fought it at the cost of hundreds and thousands of martyred lives. What shall we then say of the folly of building the walls of the latter-day Zion on the same Jewish or rather Judaized foundations!

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9. My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

With a high degree of probability the first word in the Hebrew translated "*because* of the prophets" should be taken as indicating the general subject of this portion (vs. 9–40), and should be translated "of," or "concerning the prophets." Jeremiah has introduced and indicated his general subject repeatedly in precisely this form (48: 1 and 49: 1, 7, 23, 28). Then the verse should read, "Concerning the prophets." "My heart within me is broken; all my bones are relaxed" (are *soft* through fear); "I am as a drunken man," etc., "*because* of the Lord and *because* of his holy words," *i. e.*, words which denounce sin. This word "*because of*" is not the same which stands before the word "prophets." This means "from before the Lord," or from the face of the Lord, I am filled with fear, etc.——Where our translation, following the ancient versions, has the word "shake," in the clause "all my bones *shake;*" the later lexicographers, following its etymology and the usage of its cognate words, make it, "My bones are soft, weak;" I have lost my strength.——These prophets are of course the false prophets whose influence was in every point of view utterly pernicious.

10. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force *is* not right.

In some cases it is somewhat difficult to discriminate between a literal use of the words for adultery and the figurative which applies them to idolatry. Here I incline to the latter, because the thought seems to be upon the great national sin of the people, as is also indicated v. 15: "For from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness" [impiety] "gone forth into all the land." The land is full of idolaters—people committing adultery against the God of their national covenant who was a husband to them. At the same time it might be said that idolatry begat and fostered adultery in the sense of violating the marriage covenant in their social state. But the prophet does not seem to think of this here. In the words "Because of swearing the land mourneth," the English reader naturally thinks of profane swearing in our modern sense. I am led to a different view of the meaning: (1.) Because I do not find the original word * used here ever employed for the profane oath; but only for the solemn oath and curse; most commonly that of the Lord himself. (2.) We get a very appropriate sense if we ap-

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ply it to the great curse which Jehovah denounced in his law (see Deut. 27: 15–26, and 28: 15–68) against precisely such sins as had now become both national and inveterate. This awful curse of the Lord their God had begun to fall terribly upon the land. Who then should not quail with terror and find all his bones soft and his heart sinking within him?——"Their course is evil," *bad*, rushing on headlong evermore from lesser to greater sin. "Their force is not right," in the sense that all their great influence is wrong, ruinous.

11. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

"Profane" in the strong sense of impious, reckless of the fear and honor of God. It was horrible that both prophet and priest, the orders who chiefly bore the religious responsibilities of the nation, to whom men looked for pious example and instruction, were utterly lost to all sense of their duty, and were deeply apostate from God. "Yea, in my house" (the temple) "have I found altars for Baal," which is the thing referred to here. (See 2 Kings 21: 5, and 23: 12, and Ezek. 8: 3, 9, 10, etc.)

12. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery *ways* in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, *even* the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

These figures are at once very plain and very forcible. "Slippery places" are of course dangerous at the best. How much more so in the darkness! The wise and careful always avoid such risks if they can. The Lord means to show them that their way must lead to ruin. He will surely bring upon them "the time of their visitation" with extremest judgments. See the same phrase concerning the men of Anathoth (11: 23).

13. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

14. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

The noticeable thing in these verses is the stronger shading of odiousness and of guilt in the prophets of Jerusalem than in the prophets of Samaria. In those of Samaria the Lord had seen "folly," the lack of sense, insipidity, as the original legitimately signifies; but in the prophets of Jerusalem "a horrible thing," in-

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expressibly revolting and loathsome. The prophets of Samaria made the people err; those of Jerusalem so strengthened the hands of evil-doers that none turned back from his wicked ways. Samaria was bad enough; Jerusalem was indefinitely worse. Her false prophets threw their influence with deadly effect against all the Lord could do to bring the people to repentance. This was insufferably grievous and provoking. They are to him as Sodom and Gomorrah—the standing type of foulest sin. The reason of this discrimination against the prophets of Jerusalem obviously is, that they sinned against far greater light than their brethren of Samaria. They had the house and the worship of God in the midst of them, and the Lord's true prophets had often borne their testimony there. That great axiom in morals, *The light sinned against measures the guilt of the sinner*, finds here both illustration and proof.

15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

Jerusalem, which should have been the central and radiating point for good influences to all the land, was in fact the very opposite—the source and fountain of wickedness for the whole land. The power which place, position, and prestige gave them for good, they perverted for evil. What could be more odious to God!—— Let us note here how fearful is this warning to those who hold high positions in the church or in the community, but desecrate them by scandalous sin! How much reason the Lord has for launching his direst thunderbolts upon their heads!——The evil denounced upon these sinners is, that they shall have an intensely *bitter* portion. See the same expression in chap. 8: 14, and 9: 15.

16. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, *and* not out of the mouth of the LORD.

17. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

The phrase "They make you vain," might in some connections mean, They seduce you into idolatry—to the worship of "vanities," according to the common use of this word and of its cognates for idols. But the connection here decidedly sustains the sense of *delude, deceive.* They make you believe a lie; they say to those who despise Jehovah, "Ye shall have peace," than which nothing

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could be more false or more ruinous. Hence most fitly the Lord exhorts the people to give no heed to their words. So it is always ineffably perilous to listen to men who profess to speak truly for God, yet in fact speak only the visions of their own heart. Men sometimes pervert the Bible so that it no longer utters (in their construction of it) the true voice of God, but seems to indorse their own lies. So doing they wield a terrible power for evil. They assume a fearful responsibility before God.

18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard *it?*

This verse is by no means to be taken as a continuation of what the false prophets say; but perhaps as a continuation of what the Lord was saying in v. 16; certainly as the words of the Lord. In the matter of the false and the true prophets, nothing could be more important than to draw the line between them definitely and distinctly, giving the marks and tests whereby each class may be known. Hence the Lord gives these tests here. "Look for the man who has stood in the counsel" (so our English translation), but the Hebrew would almost bear the other word "*council*"—*i. e.*, who has stood in consultation with the Lord; who has been in his conclave, among his confidential friends. The word fully expresses the idea of entire sympathy, and of full and free communion. It is used Ps. 89: 7: "God is greatly to be feared in the *assembly* of his saints;" also Ps. 25: 14: "The *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear him; he will show them his covenant." See also Prov. 3: 32, and Job 15: 8. The sense is, one who has been in close and intimate communion with God, who has listened carefully and affectionately to his words, and who has enjoyed precious manifestations of his love.——The further description in our text should be carefully noted: "One who has seen and heard his words;" and in the parallel clause, "Who is he that has bent his mind in closest attention to the word of the Lord, and so has truly heard it?" These are the men who may be relied on to speak the word of God truly and honestly. A thoroughly docile and humble spirit, a heart in deep sympathy with God, a supreme regard for his will, and for his revealed word as its reliable manifestation to men—these are decisive tests by which the true prophet may be distinguished from the false in every age.

19. Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

20. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

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These verses paint in terribly vivid colors the judgments about to break forth primarily on the heads of the false prophets, and ultimately on those whom they had deluded to their destruction. The whirlwind is one of the most terrific engines of destruction anywhere developed in our world, and not least in the oriental, half-tropical climate of Judea. It goes forth from the Lord in his wrath. The word rendered "grievous," means one which is *rolled upon itself* as it moves along, or rather, which is twirled and hurled down from Jehovah's hand so as to come rushing and crashing upon the head of the wicked. Nothing shall set back this outburst of wrath from Jehovah until he shall have fully accomplished the thoughts of his heart. The wicked will not heed the warning now, but they *will* think of it in the *latter days*. Wicked men absorb their attention in the worthless pleasures and comparatively worthless business of this world, as if they could not possibly save time for serious thought upon God's threatened judgments; but in the latter days they will find time enough to think of their folly; time enough to consider all these things perfectly. Alas! but it will be then too late for thought to their own profit!——Hengstenberg renders v. 19 thus: "Behold the tempest of the Lord—glowing fire goes forth, a *constant* storm; on the head of the ungodly shall it rest; the glowing anger of the Lord will not return," etc.

21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

The Lord disclaims all responsibility for the mission or the doctrine of these false prophets. They went forth unbidden.—— Here we have the same phrase as in v. 18, showing that these false prophets had never stood in Jehovah's counsel. If they had, far other results would have followed.

23. *Am* I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?

24. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

The special bearing of these interrogations is upon the case of those false prophets. Do they think, saith the Lord, that I do not know their hearts? Do they flatter themselves that I am too far off to see and to know them? or that they can hide in secret places so as to escape the searching glance of my eye? In these sublime strains the Lord asserts his omniscience and omnipresence.

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Himself every-where, his eye looking through all hearts—how vain for the wicked to dream that they can think a thought God will not know, or frame a device that his eye will not pierce through, or do a foul deed which he will not surely see and terribly disclose before the universe?

25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

26. How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

The false prophets of whom the Lord here speaks made great account of pretended dreams. The records of the Old Testament show abundantly that the Lord did sometimes speak to men in dreams. The cases of Joseph, of Daniel, of Nebuchadnezzar, will be readily recalled. The Lord recognized this as one of his modes of speaking to men (Num. 12: 2), but he also warned his people against being imposed upon by false pretenders to inspired dreams (Deut. 13: 1–3.)

28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What *is* the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

29. *Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?

If any of those false prophets have a dream, let them tell it as a mere dream, a simple fancy of the mind in sleep; but let them and let all who hear them distinguish broadly between such dreams and my words. If I give my word to any prophet, let him utter it faithfully at whatever cost—a suggestion not without its use to Jeremiah.——What hath the chaff to do with the wheat, saith the Lord? Let chaff go for chaff and nothing better. Never let it arrogate a place for itself with the wheat and claim to be wheat. ——In v. 29 the point on which these questions bear might be either the energy of God's word in its power on human hearts in general, or its energy when God puts it in the hearts of his prophets to deliver to lost men. The former seems on the whole the preferable view as setting forth the essential, eternal distinction between the wheat and the chaff. Yet the latter has a great truth in it, viz., that God's word in the heart of a prophet was with burning power, as Jeremiah had occasion to say. (See 20: 9.) But this latter thought is really included under the former.

30. Therefore behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.

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The key to the sense of this verse is in the phrase, "My words." What are these? and in what sense did the false prophets "steal them one from another," and each from his neighbor?——I answer, The phrase refers here not so much to the substance of the messages sent from God through his true prophets as to certain conventional terms and names by which they were introduced and indicated; *e. g.*, the Hebrew verb rendered "Thus *saith** the Lord" a verb which means "to whisper," to utter with a low murmuring sound. This verb is used exclusively to denote the verbal communications which the Lord made to his prophets. Also the word translated "burden,"† a prediction of calamity. This word also was appropriated by the true prophets, and belonged to them exclusively. These two words had passed into current use to designate the messages sent from God by his true prophets. Now the crime of these false prophets lay in stealing these words, these prophetic formulæ. They are said to steal them every one from his neighbor, but originally they came from the true prophets, and really from God himself. Then they passed them round among themselves from hand to hand—stolen goods—used by them to make the people think they were God's true prophets, and bore his messages.

31. Behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

To "use their tongues" is here to make *too free* use of them—to *misuse* them. *How* they misused them will be understood from the remarks just made in notes on v. 30. The Hebrew verb rendered "say," and "he saith," is precisely one of those which the Lord had appropriated to signify the whisperings of divine words to his true prophets. They misused their tongues by stealing this word and using it to make the people believe that their lies came from God by direct revelation.

32. Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

"By their lightness" is precisely by their vain-glorious boasting; their assuming to be more and better than they were—even to be prophets of God when they were only prophets of Satan.—— "They shall not profit this people at all," must be understood in the strong sense of its opposite—they shall prove only the ruin of this people.

33. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What *is* the burden of the LORD?

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thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.

If any one—prophet, priest, or of the people—should ask Jeremiah what "the burden of the Lord" is, in the well understood sense, What message of calamity does the Lord send? he was told what to answer: I will even *forsake you*, saith the Lord. The utmost depth of ruin lay in that burden. To be forsaken of the Lord was the direst calamity that could befall them, or any of us either.

34. And *as for* the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.

But if any one from among the false prophets, the vile priests or people, should steal this divine formula and say, "The burden of the Lord;" the Lord would certainly punish that man and his house—not him alone, but to make his punishment more terrible, his house, his family, and his estate besides.

35. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

36. And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God.

37. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

In these verses the Lord instructs the people what phraseology they may fitly use, and solemnly cautions them against the usage of the false prophets above referred to which had grown up into a grievous abuse. They might properly say, "What hath the Lord answered" or "what hath he spoken?" But they must not say, "The burden of the Lord," since this phrase belonged exclusively to God and his true prophets, and the wicked perversion of it by any false prophet would be done at his own peril; God would make every such man's "word his own burden," *i. e.*, of curses upon his own head.

38. But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD.

39. Therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, *and cast you* out of my presence:

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40. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

If they persisted in abusing these solemn words, sacredly appropriated to signify revelations direct from God, he would terribly punish them, forgetting, forsaking them and casting them forth from their city and land to make them a perpetual reproach and shame. This should be the righteous doom of the false prophets, and of all who gave currency to their delusions by abetting their objects and helping them to assume the phraseology and reputation of true prophets.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The date and subject of this short chapter are obvious—the date being after the second deportation of captives to Babylon at the close of the short reign of Jehoiachin ["Jeconiah"], and, indeed, after Zedekiah his successor had ascended the throne. The subject is the character of those who were carried to Babylon in contrast with the character of those who remained behind.

1. The LORD showed me, and behold, two baskets of figs *were* set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.

2. One basket *had* very good figs, *even* like the figs *that are* first ripe: and the other basket *had* very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.

3. Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that can not be eaten, they are so evil.

The reader will notice the decisive marks by which the prophet indicates that these baskets of figs are seen in vision only, and have no reality in actual life. He did not say, "The Lord sent me to gather one basket of first ripe figs, very good, and another of foul rotten figs, and I did so:" but he says, "The Lord *showed me*," *i. e.*, by the Spirit upon me *caused me to see* two baskets, etc. The deportation of captives with Jeconiah took away the better class—the princes, artisans, and mechanics who had more stamina of character, and would be more useful to the king of Babylon in his great building schemes, than the lower, less skilled, less industrious classes. The author of 2 Kings (in chap. 24: 14–16)

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was careful to state precisely this fact—that Nebuchadnezzar took away all the better people, "the mighty of the land," the skillful mechanics as well as the princes. The selection and removal of these classes would not only augment the working force in Babylon, but would lessen the working force in Jerusalem.

4. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
5. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for *their* good.
6. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull *them* down; and I will plant them, and not pluck *them* up.
7. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I *am* the LORD; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

The basket of good figs represented these better classes taken away to Babylon. In his kind and wise providence the Lord had taken this method to sift the nation and save the more precious grain for replanting in the land after the captivity. Some writer has said that the Lord sifted two kingdoms, England and Holland, to get precious seed wherewith to sow New England in the seventeenth century. Those pilgrims were truly the noblest of men, proved to be such before they came by their long and patient endurance of extreme privations, losses, disabilities, and sufferings for conscience' sake. So in this case the Lord twice sifted the Jewish people to get good seed wherewith to replant the land; first, in taking away, under Nebuchadnezzar, the more industrious and skillful citizens, who may, on this very ground, be safely presumed to have been less corrupt morally, and less debased by idolatry, than the indolent classes. Laziness and Idleness are Satan's recruiting officers. He never fails to find work for idle hands to do. Then, again, in a manner much like the sifting to find the pilgrims, the Lord sifted the captive population when the decree of Cyrus invited them to return to their land. The men of faith in God, the men who cherished most fondly in their hearts the love of their holy city and sacred temple and the classic memories of their heroic dead, would tear themselves away from their Chaldean homes and their accumulated comforts, and strike out upon the hardships of a wilderness journey and of a new settlement. This call would also somewhat test their physical energy. Invalids and men broken down by their vices or their age would shrink from these hardships.——These better people taken to Babylon, the Lord would meet there with his blessing; would

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bring them to repentance; cure them of their national passion for idols; and cause them to return to himself with all their heart.

8. And as the evil figs, which can not be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt:

9. And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for *their* hurt, *to be* a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

10. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

On the other hand, the remnant that were left in the land, including those also who went into Egypt, were the dregs of the population, and God let them gravitate to the very bottom of human existence, and finally become extinct. They went into Egypt in defiance of the Lord's repeated warnings by his prophet. Their going was itself proof of their vain confidence in themselves and in human help, in contempt of the word of the Lord their God. Hence they could rationally expect nothing better than his exterminating curse. It never can be well for men to press their way in a course of defiance against the warnings of Jehovah. What can result from such a course but ruin!——This chapter is a beautiful lesson on the ways of God in his providence over nations and entire classes of men. With far-reaching plans; with perfect command of all the agencies of war and of captivity; with full control over the master mind of Nebuchadnezzar, and of his schemes for building great Babylon, the Lord makes all these agencies subserve his purpose of sifting the Jewish people, and taking out for his future use all the nobler elements. These he purposed to convert to himself, under the discipline of this fearful captivity, and then to lead them back to rebuild his city and temple, to reconstruct the Hebrew nation, and to nurture the germs of their religious life, till, in the fullness of time, the Messiah should come. What can not this all-wise and all-pervading providence of God accomplish! Was ever any thing too hard for the Lord! Let such manifestations of his divine power and wisdom inspire our confidence afresh in his resources now and evermore to fulfill all his plans of mercy for his Zion and for this lost world.

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CHAPTER XXV.

The date of this chapter is definitely given, viz., in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was also the first of king Nebuchadnezzar—the very year in which the first great invasion of Judea was made by the combined forces of Chaldea, Moab, Ammon and Syria. (See 2 Kings 24: 1, 2.) The great central thought of the chapter is, *Jehovah, King of the nations of the earth*, judging and punishing them for their iniquities; beginning here with his own covenant but now apostate people; continuing and widening the sweep of his judgments, so as to include Egypt and all those powers of Western Asia which had allied themselves with Egypt and Judea against the Chaldean empire; and then, after seventy years, turning his hand in righteous retribution to judge and punish the Chaldeans and proud Babylon. How God would bring about these visitations of judgment; how he would pass around among all the nations the wine-cup of his wrath and make them drink to their own infatuation and reeling and madness so that they would fall an easy prey to those enemies whom the Lord would use as his rod for their destruction—are also embraced in this chapter.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that *was* the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;

2. The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

3. From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that *is* the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

In v. 3 the prophet solemnly reminds the people how long he had been bearing to them the messages of the Lord, even since the thirteenth year of Josiah; then twenty-three years. Josiah reigned thirty-one years; Jehoahaz three months; Jehoiakim was now in his fourth year. Hence the footing stands thus: Under Josiah say nineteen; under the next two kings four; equal to twenty-three. He reminds them also that he had brought these messages in solemn earnestness, rising up early and speaking, as one awake betimes, upon whose heart the burden lay so heavily that his sleep was short and the morning hour found him waiting and full of ardor for his work. But they had not hearkened.

4. And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants

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the prophets, rising early and sending *them;* but ye have not hearkened nor inclined your ear to hear.

Not Jeremiah alone but other prophets also the Lord had sent to them. We have the prophecies of Zephaniah and of Habakkuk within this same period, and the history suggests that Huldah the prophetess was a leading spirit in the great reformation under Josiah. She may have outlived him, and have thus been among those who bore their solemn and earnest testimony for God and God's testimony from himself to this sinning, apostatizing people. Urijah also appears in this book (26 : 20–23) as a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord and fell a martyr to his fidelity.

5. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers forever and ever:

6. And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

7. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

These verses give us the substance of their testimony—the main points made in their exhortations and expostulations with the people.——Of the two imperative verbs in v. 5, "*Turn again and dwell in the land,*" the latter as usual is rather a future and a promise, thus; Turn again from your sins, and so ye shall dwell in your land.——"Provoking the Lord to anger with the *work* of their hands," has special reference to the idol-gods made by their own hands.

8. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words,

9. Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations.

"Families of the north" are so called, not because their country lay precisely on the north, for it was more nearly east, but because they came into the land of Palestine from the north. (See notes on 1 : 14, 15.)——In v. 9 the manner in which the Lord speaks of Nebuchadnezzar is peculiar: "And I will send to Nebuchadnezzar *my servant,*" who will of course come in response to my call. So easily does God sway the heart and shape the plans and move-

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ments of the monarchs of the earth, using any of them, even the loftiest and the proudest, with the same ease as the weaker, to fulfill the high and far-reaching purposes of his wisdom.

10. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

11. And this whole land shall be a desolation *and* an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

In oriental life the sound of the millstone is heard in every family, each one doing its grinding with its own hand-mill. So of the light of a candle. The candle is among the necessaries of comfortable life. Hence not only should all joyous sounds cease from those lands, but all the sounds of busy common life, indicating that the country was left void of inhabitants—an utter desolation.——"An astonishment" of course means an occasion for astonishment to all the people of the earth; a marvel before the world.——The duration of this wide sway of Babylon and of the Chaldean power should be seventy years. The records of profane history concur with the testimony of Scripture to confirm the fact here stated. Beginning with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the duration of that dynasty was seventy years, closing with its subversion by Cyrus at the head of the combined armies of Media and Persia. In the line of profane history we have a witness, every way competent and worthy, in the so-called "Canon of Ptolemy," which contains a table of the reigns of the several monarchs of Babylon from B. C. 747, to B. C. 331—the end of the Persian dynasty. "This ancient document," remarks George Rawlinson, "which has always stood high in authority, has recently been confirmed in so many points by the inscriptions found in the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, that its authentic character is established beyond all possibility of cavil and dispute." In this canon we have the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, forty-three years; of Evil-merodach, two; of Neriglissar, four; of Nabonned (alias Labynetus), seventeen; and jointly with him in the closing period of his reign, his son Belshazzar; in all equal to sixty-six; an approximation to the scriptural record which seems to make the time about seventy.——In the line of Scripture history, we have the authority of Daniel (9: 1, 2), who in the first year after the fall of the Chaldean dynasty, finding by the prophecies of Jeremiah that the captivity was set for seventy years, saw in his own personal history that this period was near its close. He went to Babylon with the first captives in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and of course knew that he had been there then about seventy years.—— The length of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the most important item in this chronological series, is in like manner confirmed by the concurrent testimony of both sacred and profane history. Sacred his-

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tory gives us first the years of Jehoiakim coincident with Nebuchadnezzar, *i. e.*, eleven, less four, equal to seven. Add to this the years of the captivity of Jehoiachin his immediate successor, viz., thirty-six; the amount is forty-three. In the line of profane history, not only the "Canon of Ptolemy," but the testimony of Berosus makes his reign forty-three years. Of course in our text (v. 11) "the king of Babylon" is not to be restricted to any one king, but embraces the dynasty of Babylonian kings down to the Persian rule. See a different but accurate form of stating the same general fact in chap. 27: 6, 7.

12. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

13. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, *even* all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

14. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

And so it came to pass. After seventy years the Medo-Persian power subjugated Babylon, and struck the first fatal blow at her supremacy and pride. She never rose again to her former splendor. Not many years passed before the doom of desolation marched on apace to its accomplishment, and Babylon went rapidly down toward utter extinction. During more than two thousand years past it has been only a mass of ruins. V. 13 seems to allude to those extended prophecies of Jeremiah "against all the nations" which we find in chaps. 46–51. Naturally the critics raise the question how this allusion can be accounted for in this place? Were those prophecies already written at this time? Or is this reference precisely prophetic, *i. e.*, in anticipation of portions yet to be written and embraced in this book of Jeremiah? Or was this clause added by the compiler of these prophecies after all the materials of the volume had been written? I incline to the last-named supposition, viz., that the last half of v. 13 was added by the compiler.——In v. 14, the rather unusual phrase, "Serve themselves of them," means to exact service of them; to compel them to serve. The tables shall be turned; the relation between the parties reversed. Whereas Babylon made those nations her servants for seventy years, they shall make Babylon serve during other long periods thereafter. (See chap. 27: 6, 7, and Isa. 14: 2.)

15. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me;

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Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.

16. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.

See some remarks on this "wine-cup" of doom in notes on chap. 13: 12–14. It had been in use before Jeremiah, *e. g.*, by Isaiah (29: 9, and 51: 17, 21, 22); also by Nahum (3: 11), and by Habakkuk (2: 16). It occurs repeatedly in Jeremiah; *e. g.*, 49: 12, and 51: 7, 57, and Lam. 4: 21. Based on the analogy between a drunken man reeling on to his fall and ruin, and a nation weakened by its vices, given over of God to madness and infatuation, and reeling on with tottering step and headlong rush toward its destruction, it gives us a vivid sense of the great truth so often illustrated in human history, that whom God would destroy he first leaves to infatuation; or, in the terse phrase of the ancient heathen authors: "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad."

17. Then took I the cup at the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me:

"Made all the nations to drink," carries out the peculiar phraseology brought to view first in this prophet's original commission (chap. 1: 10): "See, I have this day set thee over the nations to root out, to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." See notes on this passage. What the prophet is commissioned to announce, he is said to DO; or, as here, to "make" the nations do. Of course this is a *figurative* conception, involving no literal cup of wine whatever.

18. *To wit*, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse; as *it is* this day;

For obvious reasons, Jerusalem and Judah come first. Their sins had been most provoking to God. Indeed, it might be said, perhaps, that their case determined (as to time and manner) this whole series of judgments on the nations of Western Asia, calling forth those schemes of divine providence which then raised up the great Chaldean power, and made it a hammer to break those nations in pieces.——The clause, "As it is this day," seems to have been written by the compiler of these prophecies, who added it after the first great installment of fulfilling events.

19. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people;

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Pharaoh of Egypt legitimately comes next. For many centuries, even back to the age of the early Pharaohs, the kingdom that sat on the Nile had been the pitted antagonist of the kingdom that sat on the Euphrates. Between these two great powers of ancient times, wars were frequent; antipathies, eternal. Each sought to draw into alliance with itself whatever other tribes and sovereignties lay intermediate or adjacent. Hence, Egypt had drawn into her alliance the powers named in these subsequent verses, especially (vs. 20–24), and consequently involved them in her own doom. The first decisive blow against the Egyptian power was struck in the great battle at Carchemish, to which Jeremiah refers (chap. 46: 2). From this she never rallied during the sway of this Chaldean dynasty.

20. And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,

21. Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,

22. And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which *are* beyond the sea,

23. Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all *that are* in the utmost corners.

24. And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert,

25. And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes,

In v. 20 "the mingled people" refers to some dependencies of Egypt occupied by a mixed population, or perhaps to foreigners residing among the Egyptians. The same word is used in the latter sense of Babylon and its foreign population (chap. 50: 37). See also Ezek. 30: 5. Many Greek adventurers were at this time residing in Egypt. Herodotus states that Psammeticus, father of Pharaoh-nechoh, called in Ionians and Carians to his aid and then assigned them homes in his country.——Uz, called in the Septuagint Ausitis, is the region in the north-eastern part of Arabia Deserta, between Idumea, Palestine, and the Euphrates.——With great historic accuracy only a "remnant of Ashdod" is named, because Psammeticus had nearly ruined that principality by a twenty-nine years' siege of their city. Dedan, Tema, Buz, etc., were provinces in that great country lying south and east of Palestine, comprehensively known as Arabia. Zimri (v. 25) is supposed to be the city named Zabram by the ancient geographer Ptolemy, lying between Mecca and Medina.

26. And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which

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are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

Much critical labor has been spent over the word Sheshach. All agree that it means Babylon; how and why it should, is the difficult problem. Following Jerome, some make it Babel by a curiously enigmatical mode of transposing the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In this mode the order is precisely reversed, and you take the last letter instead of the first; the last but one in place of the first but one, etc. Thus sh, sh, corresponds to B, B, and ch, to L; and so you have sh, sh, and ch, in place of Babel. But still it is a grave question whether this conceit was in vogue as early as the time of Jeremiah. Probably it was not. And again, there is no apparent reason for his using it even if it were. Fear of offending the Chaldeans with whom he manifestly sympathized, is not a pertinent reason, because this book contains two whole chapters (50 and 51) of most stringent predictions of the fall of Babylon. And yet further, in chap. 51: 41, we have both names, Sheshach and Babylon, in the same verse. Hence partial concealment could not have been his motive. Maurer suggests a solution that seems plausible. He supposes Sheshach is for Sesach, and that this is abbreviated from Sichsach, which means a thicket of undergrowths, a dense mass of foliage, and is transferred to a dense mass of buildings or people, and so would fitly describe Babylon. A similar transfer of this idea of a mass of foliage to a mass of men may be seen Ps. 42: 5, and Isa. 10: 18, 19, 34, and 32: 19.——That Sheshach certainly refers to Babylon is sufficiently proved by Jer. 50: 51. The other critical points mooted among commentators are of small importance.

27. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.

28. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thy hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink.

29. For lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

None of these nations could be excused from this wine-cup and its doom. Since the Lord had begun with his own people as having sinned against greater light, yet recognizing them still as his own, he could not judge them and leave other idolatrous nations unpunished. See this law of the divine administration, 1 Pet. 4: 17, 18.

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30. Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread *the grapes*, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

31. A noise shall come *even* to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations: he will plead with all flesh; he will give them *that are* wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

"The Lord shall roar" conceives of him as a lion among the beasts of the earth, coming forth in glorious demonstrations of his majesty and power.——Remarkably he utters his voice *from* his holy habitation, equivalent to "from on high," and he also roars *upon* his dwelling-place ["his habitation"], which here means Jerusalem. In the received translation we have the same word "*habitation*," as the place *from* which he roars, and also *upon* which he roars. The Hebrew gives us not the same word but different words. The first must be qualified by "from on high" and referred to heaven above; the second refers to Jerusalem, long his earthly abode; now the object of his vengeance. In this mighty movement the Lord convulses all the nations of the earth.

32. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

33. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

Calamities take a wide and fearful sweep. The nations of the earth are agitated with wars and conquests. A new power arises in the person of the Chaldean empire, and gains a world-wide ascendency, subjugating all other nations and tribes to its sway. This is fitly compared to the roaring of a lion and to his going forth to destroy; or to an earthquake which rocks the nations from end to end of the inhabited world.

34. Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves *in the ashes*, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

35. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

36. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling

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of the principal of the flock, *shall be heard:* for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture.

37. And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

38. He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

The "shepherds" here are kings. "The principal of the flock" is a parallel phrase, meaning the head-men who take the lead of the people. This is the class that feel most keenly such a fearful convulsion, since it subverts their thrones and dooms them personally to special peril; ordinarily to imprisonment, banishment, or death.——In v. 38, the figure of the lion still appears. The Lord comes forth as a lion from his covert and goes abroad to destroy. "The fierceness of the oppressor" is precisely the fury of his oppressing sword, his avenging, destroying sword, with reference to the wrath of God and his instruments of righteous retribution.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This chapter should be read in connection with chapters 7–9. See notes introductory to those chapters. As stated there it is manifest that this chapter is only a renewed mention of the prophecy drawn out there much more fully, and renewed here for the sake of recording the persecution against Jeremiah, of which that signal prophecy in the temple was the occasion. Proofs of identity between that prophecy and this lie in the place where delivered, viz., the temple; in the substance of the message, "Amend your ways," etc.; but especially in the threatened doom, "I will make this temple like Shiloh." Still further proof of identity appears in the fact that the message is given there (chap. 7–9) with so much greater fullness than here, while here the subject is barely introduced in a general way, and then the discourse turns to speak of Jeremiah's forcible arrest, and the efforts made by the one party to take his life, and by the other to rescue him.

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying,

2. Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words

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that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:

3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings:

The date is given here, but is not given in chaps. 7–9. "The beginning of the reign," etc., was not necessarily the first year. In chap. 28: 1, the same phrase is explained to be the fourth year. The first year is improbable, because it is too early to expect so violent persecution of Jeremiah, and especially too early for all the events which are recorded of Urijah (vs. 20–23). They would naturally require more time than any fraction of one year. ——"Speak unto all the cities," means, of course, to the people of those cities.

4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, If ye will not hearken to me to walk in my law, which I have set before you,

5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending *them*, but ye have not hearkened;

6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

7. So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

See notes on chap 7: 1–14. This prophecy was delivered in the most public place in the kingdom, and could not fail to attract the attention of the priests, prophets, and people. The priests were, as a class, exceedingly corrupt. It was because of their general corruption that the Lord raised up prophets to do their legitimate work in the line of moral and religious instruction. This fact would itself naturally provoke their envy and hostility against the faithful prophets. The "prophets" here associated with the priests in opposition to Jeremiah, were the false prophets —utterly bad men.

8. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

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The verb rendered "took" means, they seized him violently; they made a forcible arrest.——The main point of their indictment would be exciting sedition against the government. Very probably they gave it the form of constructive blasphemy, as spoken against the sacred temple. (See Acts 6: 11–13.) If the prophet had been without defense and justification, the charge must have been grave and serious.

10. When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S *house.*

It is noticeable that Jeremiah's friends were among the *princes*, indicating that under the reign of Josiah he had powerful friends at court; stood high with that king; and that some, at least, of those friends still lived, and were in power to befriend him.

11. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man *is* worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

The priests and prophets now bring the case before these princes and before the people—the latter, as appears here, not being in the prosecution, but rather in the capacity of judges in the case. The priests and the prophets are his persecutors and accusers. There is no intimation thus far, in this chapter, of the part taken by Jehoiakim in this transaction.

12. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14. As for me, behold, I *am* in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

15. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

Jeremiah's defense is straightforward, outspoken, fearless, and every way appropriate to his circumstances. He pleads, "I have said only what the Lord bade me say with a special and solemn

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injunction not to lessen a word of it" (v. 2). I beseech you to listen to this word from the Lord, and set yourselves to amend your ways rather than to end my life, for only so can you hope the Lord will arrest this threatened judgment and spare you and the city. As for me, I am in your power and you can take my life if you choose; but you will do it at your fearful peril! For, know ye of a certainty that God sent me with all these words, and they will surely be executed upon you unless you repent!

16. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man *is* not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

The princes and the people are convinced and carried by this defense. They reverence the authority of God; they believe in the mission of his prophet, and dare not set themselves against him and his master.

17. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

"The elders" here referred to may have included some of the princes and some from among the people who were not princes. But manifestly they still retained the spirit of Josiah's administration. The old men would be most reliable to withstand this movement of the wicked priests and false prophets against Jeremiah's life.

18. Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed *like* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

This Micah was the same whose prophecies we have. The passage here referred to is Micah 3: 12. This case shows clearly that the writings of the earlier prophets were now in the hands of the people.——The example was every way in point. The name of Hezekiah must have had great weight with all but the most wicked and desperate. He was a powerful monarch, wise and successful, and withal signally honored of God with victory and deliverance in respect to the Assyrian power. That he heard this

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threatening from the Lord through the prophet Micah so reverently; that he and his people, so far from attempting to harm the prophet, humbled themselves before God and sought and found mercy; made up a case exceedingly pertinent as an example.——The last clause of v. 19, reads literally, "And we are doing a great evil against our own souls," *i. e.*, we are about to do it; shall do it if we go on to take Jeremiah's life.

20. And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah:

21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt;

22. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, *namely*, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and *certain* men with him into Egypt.

23. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

This fact is not elsewhere alluded to. It is obviously introduced here to show how desperate and violent Jehoiakim was, and how much reason Jeremiah had to fear fatal violence against himself. Some have suggested that this case of Urijah was adduced by the opposing party to offset the case of Micah. The text does not intimate this. That Urijah's dead body was tumbled into the graves of the common people, indicates that his enemies intended the utmost indignity, and refused him the honors fitly accorded to real prophets of the Lord.

24. Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

This Ahikam, son of Shaphan, comes to view again chap. 39: 14 as the father of Gedaliah, to whom the Chaldean prince committed Jeremiah for safe keeping, and for the sympathy and care which a man who had come forth from a hard prison-life so much needed. The presence and powerful aid of Ahikam seem to have been the decisive agency appointed of God to save Jeremiah from a violent death. It did not avail in future years to save him from severe imprisonment and manifold perils, as we shall see.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

In the first verse, which purports to give the date of this prophecy, there is manifestly an error of some ancient transcriber in writing Jehoiakim for Zedekiah. Probably the mistake was occasioned by following the introduction to the previous chapter, where the same clause occurs, "In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim." That this *is* an error is manifest, for v. 3 assumes that Zedekiah is now king; v. 12 shows that the prophet bore this message personally to Zedekiah; v. 20 proves that the captivity of Jeconiah, son and successor of Jehoiakim, is past; and, finally, chap. 28: 1 states that *the same year* was in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. It is then a simple matter of fact that the ancient transcribers of the sacred text were liable to mistakes, and did sometimes make them. That form of inspiration which preserved the original authors of the Scriptures from any vital error in doctrine, did not reach all the transcribers to preserve them from all mistake in their transcripts. Compared with any other ancient document, the Scriptures are remarkably free from this sort of error. Where errors have occurred, the means of correction are generally, as here, at command.——This chapter then dates in the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah. (See 28: 1.) The time draws near for bringing, not the Jewish nation only, but other adjacent nations also, under the yoke of the king of Babylon. Hence the Lord makes a special effort to impress this truth on the minds of the Jewish king and people.

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2. Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck,

3. And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah;

The question whether these bonds and yokes were merely seen in vision, or were actually made, may be raised, out of deference to those critics who assume that almost every thing pertaining to prophetic life is vision; and yet how can there be any question here? How could yokes be sent in vision by the hand of embassadors to the kings of Edom and Moab? How could those kings know any thing about the prophet's vision? Were they also put into a state of prophetic vision, so that they could see these things? Were the consequent transactions of the next chapter, where Hananiah takes off the yoke from Jeremiah's neck

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and breaks it, also done in vision? And did his death, in judgment therefor, occur in vision only? Manifestly those events of prophetic life which were interwoven with the outward life of other men, must have been transacted in the external world. And we shall not be misled if we follow the simple rule that things done in vision are said to be *shown* and *seen* only, while things *done* in the outward world and in actual life, are plainly stated to be *done*, as here: "*Make* thee bonds and yokes." The Bible is eminently a plain book, written for the common mind, and to be interpreted accordingly.——These bonds and yokes seem to have been such as were put on the necks of working cattle. The prophet wore them awhile, probably in public, before the eyes of the people, and then sent them by the hands of embassadors from the kings named to their masters, with the explanatory message which is here given.——Vs. 2–11 treat of the case of these foreign powers, while verses 12–22 treat in like manner of the king and people of Judah.

4. And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters;

5. I have made the earth, the man and the beast that *are* upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

It was meet that God should introduce himself (so to speak) to those heathen kings as the great Creator of all the earth, the King of all nations, and hence as having authority to give the right of soil and political empire to whom he would.

6. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

7. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and *then* many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.

8. And it shall come to pass, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

Exercising this rightful authority he had given all those nations to the king of Babylon to rule over until the very time of *his* land

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should come, *i. e.*, the day of doom purposed of God for retribution on him and his proud city and throne. If they would serve him cheerfully, well; if not, the Lord would give them into his hands to be consumed.

9. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

10. For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.

11. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

In those nations the word of the Lord might be gainsayed by their false prophets in the form of diviners, dreamers, soothsayers, etc., as was done by false prophets in Judah. The Lord warns them to put no confidence in those gainsayers and liars.——Men claiming supernatural powers are an institution in all heathen nations, and so far as history enables us to judge, have always been so in all ages and in every clime. If it be not precisely a demand and outgrowth of human nature, it is a law of human depravity and a perpetual adjunct of a sinning race so long as they are led captive by Satan at his will.

12. I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

13. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

Here the message comes to the king and people of Judah, Why should they fall under the general doom denounced on the nations that would not serve the king of Babylon?

14. Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon; for they prophesy a lie unto you.

15. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

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Here as at every point the Lord expected his messages to be gainsayed and his demands opposed by the false and lying prophets. Hence he solemnly warns the king and people against being seduced and deceived by their representations. In v. 15, "That I may drive you out," etc., means, that this would be the *result*, not that it would be the *intent* of those lying prophets and of their lies.

16. Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD'S house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you.

17. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste?

A portion of the sacred vessels of the temple had been taken away to Babylon with Jehoiachin four years before. The false prophets were assuring the people that these vessels would soon be brought back. The Lord warns them against putting any confidence in such declarations.——"Serve the king of Babylon and live" means, "And so ye shall live"—the second verb being not a command but a promise.

18. But if they *be* prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and *in* the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon.

The people might have a test of the reliability of these prophets, and one that could be applied very soon. Bid them intercede with God to prevent the vessels of the temple and palace yet remaining from being taken to Babylon. If they had power with God, let them improve and show it in this point. The question must soon come to issue, for the final destruction of the city, temple, and palace, was at hand.

19. For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city,

20. Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem;

21. Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain *in* the house of the

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LORD, and *in* the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem;

22. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

All that had not been taken away with the young king Jehoiachin, when after a three months' reign he was borne captive to Babylon, would soon be taken away, viz., at the close of the then present reign of Zedekiah. Yet, for the comfort of those who waited humbly on the Lord, he assured them that those vessels would be brought back again and restored to their place—a sacred pledge of the restoration of a remnant of the people and of the reëstablishment of divine worship in its ancient home.——Thus the Lord through his prophet made one more effort to impress on the people and upon their king a sense of their imminent peril of ruin unless they would repent. Their case had in fact progressed so far that now the precise point where the test of obedience to God applied was submission to the king of Babylon. If they would submit kindly it should be well with them; otherwise their doom would be speedy ruin. Probably one object in sending this message to the adjacent kings, Edom, Moab, etc., was to make the stronger impression on the king and people of Judah. It was also a kindness to those foreign nations to indicate to them the path of peace and safety.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

This chapter follows the preceding closely in time, and belongs to the same series of events. It is dated in the same year (v. 1), and the yokes which Jeremiah made and put on his neck as stated in the previous chapter, Hananiah takes off and breaks in this. ——The chapter is especially valuable for its minute description of the case of Hananiah, one of the false prophets, who labored zealously to counteract the influence of the true prophets of the Lord. This case may stand as a sample of the class, an illustration of the methods pursued by those mischievous and wicked men.

1. And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying,

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What is said to have occurred in the "beginning of the reign of Zedekiah" is more definitely set to his fourth year and fifth month. The Jews used the phrases, "the beginning" and the "latter end," to denote in a general way the early part and the latter part. In this case since Zedekiah reigned eleven years, events in his fourth year would be in the former, the early part, or "the beginning."——This transaction was public, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people in the temple.

2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.
3. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon.
4. And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Thus did this false prophet labor directly to gainsay and deny what Jeremiah had been saying. Observe, he does not shrink from using the solemn and prophetic forms of announcement: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel," and this in the very face of the stern prohibition of God himself. (See 23: 31.) His special points are, that God says he has broken the yoke of the king of Babylon; that within two full years he will restore all the sacred vessels taken from the temple to Babylon with Jeconiah, and will bring back Jeconiah himself. This indicates a degree of boldness and daring in falsehood which can scarcely be accounted for without supposing the presence and inspiration of the "father of lies."

5. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD,
6. Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD'S house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.

This first reply of Jeremiah is not to be considered as prophecy or as a message from the Lord. He does not prefix to it the formula of a divine message, "Thus saith the Lord." He means only this: So far as my personal feelings are concerned, I shall be happy to see your words on these points fulfilled. I shall be as well pleased as yourself to see all the sacred vessels of the tem-

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ple restored and all the captives brought back.——Jeremiah doubtless said this in the honesty of his heart, and it was moreover every way proper to say it as showing that his heart was not estranged from his country, but was thoroughly patriotic, sincerely alive to the honor of the temple, to the welfare of those captives, and the integrity of the kingdom.

7. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people;
8. The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.
9. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, *then* shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.

This part of Jeremiah's reply very mildly suggests that there have been prophets in former ages, and that the test of their divine mission has always been the fulfillment of their predictions. When the calamities or the blessings which they predicted came to pass, then, and not before or otherwise, was it known that the Lord had sent them. This accords with the rule for determining their claims which God himself had given (Deut. 18: 21, 22): "And if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath *not* spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him."

10. Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it.
11. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

Determined to be behind the true prophets in none of the methods used by them to deepen the impression of their words, Hananiah takes the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and breaks it. This symbolic act should naturally indicate that the Lord had reversed his purpose with regard to the king of Babylon, if indeed he ever had any purpose to yoke the nations under his sway. It would show, if true, that the Lord was then about to break the power of Babylon's king over Judah and all the other nations made subject to him before. This, Hananiah said, should take place within two full years. Consequently until that time this test of fulfillment

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could not be applied to prove him a false prophet.——Jeremiah here withdraws, having no further special message from the Lord to deliver. As the case stands, there is nothing more for him to do. Two years elapsed will show Hananiah to be a lying prophet —if the Lord shall see fit to wait so long. Jeremiah had nothing to do but wait for that time or at least for some further commission from the Lord.

12. Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah *the prophet*, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,
13. Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.
14. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.

The Lord does not wait for the lapse of two full years. This first reply assures the false prophet and the people who witness the transaction, that his breaking the yoke from Jeremiah's neck availed nothing; that God's purpose remained unchanged; nay, more, that yokes of iron would represent the servitude under which those nations should be brought to the king of Babylon. "Thou shalt make for [instead of] them yokes of iron," seems to mean, The case requires this; nothing less will fitly represent the facts. If thou wouldst be a true prophet of the Lord, give the people this symbol of their future destinies. Let them know the truth. Instead of a yoke broken, give them yokes of iron.

15. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.
16. Therefore thus saith the LORD: Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.
17. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

The daring hardihood and blasphemy of Hañaniah called for signal retribution. Hence another solemn message from the Lord, first forewarning, then smiting. The warning was given in the fifth month (v. 1). The fatal blow fell in the seventh, with only two months' delay, giving him time for reflection and repentance, as the usage of human courts fixes a future day for execution, to give the culprit time for thought and for preparation to die.——

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It may be asked, Did this man, Hananiah, die by special visitation from God? So this record implies. But would it not have been a much clearer case of special visitation, if the Lord had smitten him down suddenly at the time and on the spot? Perhaps so, but then it should be said, (*a.*) That mercy to even so guilty a man pleads for a short space for possible repentance, and God abates somewhat from the demands of justice, and perhaps from the largest possible effect of his judgments, for the sake of mercy to the guilty subject of punishment. (*b.*) And again, to the question—Would not the impression on other false prophets, and on the people, have been far better if the Lord had cut him down instantly? I answer, The legitimate purposes, and the best ultimate results of a moral system, do not hold the Almighty to furnish his moral creatures with the *utmost possible evidence* of his power and of his justice, nor to make the *utmost possible impressions* of awe and terror. In fact, the Lord usually stops at the point of *sufficient* evidence and *sufficient* moral impression to enable rational creatures to act intelligently and wisely if they will—enough to satisfy candid and honest minds; not enough to compel the uncandid and the dishonest to yield. So in the case before us, those who were in an honest unprejudiced state of mind toward God would see his hand in this awful death of Hananiah, and would shrink from such impiety; while those who were intensely committed to rebellion would repel this warning, would speculate against the hand of God, and only harden themselves the more unto their deeper and more speedy destruction. The Lord finds scope for his wisdom as well as for his justice and goodness in shaping the agencies of truth and the manifestations of his justice and of his mercy too in this world of moral probation. It is safe to assume that, in all these great matters of his moral government over a race, or rather a universe, *he doeth all things well.* If we fail to see this now, it may be set to the account of our imperfect vision, or, farther back, to the perverting influence of a heart infinitely less upright and unprejudiced than God's.

CHAPTER XXIX.

This chapter contains two letters written and sent by Jeremiah to the captives at Babylon. Their date is given proximately; it was during the reign of Zedekiah, after his immediate predecessor on the throne, Jehoiachin (here called Jeconiah), was carried captive with the better portion of the people. The first letter closes with v. 23. The remaining verses (24–32) give us the substance of a letter which one Shemaiah had written from Babylon to the people still remaining at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the priest. This letter refers to the first letter of Jeremiah to

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those captives, and therefore must have been written subsequently to its reception at Babylon. After reporting back to the captives at Babylon the substance of this letter, sent to Jerusalem most impiously and mischievously by one of their number, Jeremiah replies to it from the Lord, announcing a fearful curse on this man Shemaiah. This second letter by Jeremiah followed the first with no long interval.——This letter shows that the Lord made use of Jeremiah in his spiritual care and culture, not only of the people remaining in Judea, but of those who were taken into captivity as well. The sympathies of the prophet were strongly with those captives. In his policy he warmly approved of their giving themselves up to the king of Babylon. He knew that God had repeatedly promised good to those who should do this, and that he depended on those captives to preserve his word and name among his people, and purposed to take from among them his choice seed for replanting the land of promise, and reëstablishing the institutions of religion there. Hence he entered warmly into the spirit of this interesting correspondence. It is not clear that Jeremiah ever went to Babylon to labor with his captive brethren there in person. The next thing to a personal visit—a kind, fraternal epistle—he could give them, and did. Of his mission to the Euphrates, referred to chap. 13: 1–7, nothing further is known, save that briefest possible notice.

1. Now these *are* the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;

2. (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)

3. By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), saying,

"The remnant of the elders" are named specially and first among the parties addressed, because they have all along been the most hopeful class. If the reader will bear in mind, that falling back to a point twelve years before the captivity of Jehoiachin, we come to the death of Josiah, and that his great reformation commenced in his twelfth year, while his death occurred in his thirty-first, he will see that those nineteen years of reformation would lie within the active life of the elders here addressed. Might not these words of the prophet stir up in their hearts precious reminiscences of those better days? The reader will find this captivity of Jeconiah and others historically recorded 2 Kings

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24: 12–16, and 2 Chron. 36: 10, and referred to in Jer. 22: 26, and 28: 4.——Hilkiah, as priest, and Shaphan, as scribe, were quite prominent in the great reformation under Josiah. (See 2 Chron. 34: 8, 9, 14–22.) It is pleasant to find their sons still in friendly and even confidential relations with Jeremiah, and manifestly walking in the steps of their noble and godly fathers.—— Whether king Zedekiah sent them mainly on business of his own, or simply gave them his royal passport to carry this letter from Jeremiah, does not appear.

4. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

5. Build ye houses, and dwell *in them;* and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

6. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

It was appropriate in the outset to remind them that their captivity was of the Lord: "Whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon." Let them by all means keep their eye on the hand and purpose of God in their captivity, and so the more patiently bear their privations and wait in hope for the good which lies at the end of all the Lord's great purposes.——This point having been suggested, the Lord directs them to make their homes there, to surround themselves as they might be able with the comforts of life, and raise up families so that they should be not diminished but rather increased, because better times would surely come for their children to enjoy and to fill with their earnest and useful activities.

7. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

Of course "peace" is here in the general and usual sense of welfare. They should indentify themselves with the social and political life of the city where they lived as captives; should bear its case on their hearts in prayer, and expect to find their own involved with its welfare. This verse suggests very pleasantly the duty of Christian citizens every-where to pray for the peace of their country and of the community with which they live, and also that there may be circumstances in which we should pray for those who have injured us, and should labor heartily to overcome evil with good. The Chaldeans as a nation had done them great evil, yet the Lord's hand had been in it with benevolent and wise designs, and it therefore behooved them to drop that wrong into

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oblivion and so to pray and labor for the good of even proud Babylon, that their spirit and life should adorn the religion of the God of their fathers. So they would make their life both useful and pleasant while they remained there, and would hopefully prepare the way for returning to their own more loved home, in the land made sacred by ancient promise and by their fathers' graves.

8. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that *be* in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

9. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.

Even far away in Babylon and among the better class of the Jews, the false prophets and vain dreamers were still a curse to the people, and it was needful that the Lord through Jeremiah should admonish them to give no heed to those false men.——I doubt if any special emphasis should be laid on the phrase "*caused* to be dreamed." The meaning may be simply, Hearken not to any more dreams, whether your own or those of the false prophets.

10. For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

11. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

It had been intimated in a somewhat indefinite way that the captivity would continue but seventy years (chap. 25: 11, 12). The precise thing said there was that those nations, subdued by the king of Babylon, should serve him seventy years, and then the Lord would reverse those political relations and make Babylon the servant and other nations the masters. But here it is clearly said that after seventy years God would visit his people there and restore them to their own land. To confirm this to their wavering hearts, the Lord beautifully subjoins, "For I know my purposes and plans concerning you." Those false prophets do *not* know and your discouraged hearts do not judge rightly, but against the false prophets on the one hand and your half-despairing views on the other, *I know my thoughts touching you*, that they are thoughts of good and not of evil, to make your latter end hopeful and happy. ——In the last clause, "An expected end" does not very felicitously express the sense of the original, for the Lord does not mean, the end which you do in fact expect, nor the end which you might legitimately expect; and besides these it is not easy to find another sense which can be put upon our translation. The Hebrew

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has it, "To give you a latter end and hope." The word used for latter end admits the sense of *reward*, good at the last after virtuous toil. (See Prov. 23: 18 and 24: 14.) The addition of the word "hope" qualifies it, the two nouns blending their sense in the one idea of a hopeful, happy end.

12. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.
13. And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.
14. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

But these great blessings can come only through prayerfully seeking the face of God and finding mercy before him. The blessedness of this captivity would lie in its thoroughly uprooting their idolatry, emptying their souls of all self-righteous reliance on the forms of religion, and in casting them only and wholly upon the Lord their God. Thus self-emptied, consciously guilty and needy, they would seek after God. At this point he gave them his promise to hear and to save. Beautifully the Lord expands these cardinal ideas in respect to what constitutes successful seeking: "Ye shall seek and find when ye shall search for me *with all your heart.*" When they were deeply and solemnly in earnest, when they could think of nothing else, when their whole souls were absorbed in the one supreme desire to find God; then, so seeking, they would surely find. To such seeking God gives his promise, but to no other sort of seeking, to no seeking which enlists but half the heart, to no seeking which but slightly moves the sensibility, or which inspires effort only now and then, spasmodically. The illustrations given to the same point by our divine Lord in such cases as blind Bartimeus, the Syrophenician woman, and the prodigal son, develop the same quenchless zeal, the same determined purpose, the same intense, all-absorbing interest and devotion. Precisely this is searching for the Lord *with all the heart.* It is the only way of seeking God so as to find him. God has a right to demand both honesty and sincerity; and he does. He has a right to suspend the blessings of his mercy upon this sole condition, that they shall be sought *with all the heart.* He does so. Hence, if sinners fail to find the mercy which they suppose themselves to be seeking, let them study this promise and find here the reason of their failure. On the other hand, if any lost sinner longs for mercy and would fain seek after God to find it at his feet, let him too read in this promise the one sure and infallible condition of his success, viz., that he seek God *with all the heart.*——The promise to gather

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them and bring them back to their own land looked primarily and specially to the times of Cyrus and Zerubbabel.

15. Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;

16. *Know* that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, *and* of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;

17. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that can not be eaten, they are so evil.

18. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

19. Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them;* but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

The letter resumes the case of the false prophets among the captives in Babylon. Some of the people there were saying, "The Lord has raised up prophets for us here," referring to those deceivers. It is implied that the false prophets are flattering the exiles that king Zedekiah was strong; that the nation would rally and maintain its nationality—in this way awakening in their minds the hope of speedy return. These false hopes the Lord must needs dash to the ground, and he does. The captivity, as a means of moral reformation, had scarcely begun to take effect. The old régime at Jerusalem must be thoroughly broken up as the only adequate means of uprooting idolatry and of expelling their self-righteous reliance on the effete forms of Judaism.

20. Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

21. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;

22. And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which *are* in Babylon, saying, The

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LORD make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

23. Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and *am* a witness, saith the LORD.

From general remarks about the false prophets, Jeremiah here becomes specific; names two of these false prophets, probably the leaders; details their case and announces their terrible doom.—— Death by burning was the Chaldean usage—horrid, barbarous, and a sure index of a low grade of civilization, scarcely emerged from the barbarities of savage life. The same usage reappears in Daniel 3: 6, 11, 19–23.——That "of them a curse should be taken up by the captives," etc., means that theirs should be made an illustrative case to curse by. When people wished to imprecate the direst curses on the worst of men, they might say, "The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king roasted in the fire." Their crimes included both the most flagrant immoralities and the most shocking blasphemy in their work as false prophets.

24. *Thus* shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,

25. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that *are* at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

26. The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man *that is* mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

27. Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?

28. For therefore he sent unto us *in* Babylon, saying, This *captivity is* long: build ye houses, and dwell *in them;* and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

29. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.

Here commences the second letter written as a sort of appendix to the first and occasioned by matters growing out of it. Another of those false prophets among the captives at Babylon, Shemaiah by name, did not like the command sent out by the hand of Jeremiah, "Build ye houses and make yourselves homes and families there in Babylon." So he wrote back to Jerusalem to all the peo-

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ple there, especially addressing Zephaniah the priest, reminding him of his responsibilities and of his duty to suppress such mad fellows as the Lord's true prophets by imprisonment and the stocks. He especially named Jeremiah of Anathoth, who he said was assuming to be a prophet of the Lord among them. The reader will note the contemptuous tone of his description of the Lord's true prophets, "For every man that is mad, and that maketh himself a prophet." On receiving this letter, Zephaniah read it to the prophet Jeremiah.

30. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

31. Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:

32. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.

Hereupon the Lord gives Jeremiah a special message for this Shemaiah, which is sent to all the captives—a terrible warning to them all to beware how they encouraged the false prophets, how they implicated themselves in their wickedness, or in anywise gave heed to their falsehoods. It also denounced upon him the utter extermination of his family. God will punish him and his posterity.——Thus this chapter affords yet other illustrations of the bold and daring impiety of the false prophets; of the pernicious and wide-spread results of their influence; and of the fearfully stringent measures which became necessary to eradicate this evil.

CHAPTER XXX.

This chapter and the next are in the same strain and must be assumed to bear the same date. They manifestly contemplate the captivity as fully begun, and were written for the reading and the comfort of the exiles already in their foreign land. For it should be noted that this is not a message to be pronounced orally to the people, but it is to be written in a book, so that it may be sent to the exiles as in the case of the letters contained in chap. 29. Thus written for the people in their captivity, its tone is mainly one of promise and of rich encouragement.

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1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
2. Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.
3. For lo, the days come, saith the LORD; that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

V. 2 raises the question, How much is comprised in "all the words I have spoken to thee?" V. 4 seems designed to answer the question and to suggest the limitation, viz., to these words which follow in this immediate connection, including this chapter and probably the next (31.) Hence it does not include all that we now have in the book of Jeremiah. At another time he was directed to write out all his prophecies. (See chap 36: 2.)——V. 3 gives the key-note of this chapter and the next—the great elementary promise of restoration from the captivity to their own land. This would be naturally addressed to the exiles.

4. And these *are* the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.
5. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.
6. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?
7. Alas! for that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it: it *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

Some interpreters refer these verses to the political convulsions among the great eastern kingdoms, which resulted in breaking down the power of Chaldea and releasing the captive Jews from their exile. I think it better to refer them to the sum total of the calamities involved in the exile and in the antecedent wars, the siege, the famine, coupled with the terrors and the miseries of captivity in a far distant land. Grouped into one mass, these calamities constituted "the time of Jacob's trouble" (v. 7), the ultimate result of which God exhorts his people not to fear (v. 10), for while he will make a full end of the nations that had afflicted them, he will not make a full end of them (v. 11). It serves to confirm this construction that vs. 23, 24 must refer primarily and mainly to the judgments of God upon the Jews rather than upon those great eastern powers, since the same language (23: 19, 20) must be so referred.——The passage before us therefore contemplates the exile with its antecedents as the great "day of Jacob's

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trouble," and has for its special object to say, "*Yet he shall be saved out of it.*" It does not appear that the subjugation of Babylon by Cyrus was specially a time of trouble to the Jews; certainly it was not *the great day* of their trouble. The reason for this allusion to the recent calamities is obvious. So dark a background would set off in stronger light the blessings here to be revealed. It was well for the exiles to be reminded of the judgments so righteously sent on their city and nation. These mercies would appear thereby the more precious.

8. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, *that* I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

In this day the Lord will break the yoke of bondage imposed by Babylon on the necks of the Jewish exiles. "Strangers," people of foreign lands, shall no more make Jacob their bondman.—— "In that day" is not precisely the time of Jacob's trouble, said in v. 7 to be great, but is rather the day in which he shall be saved out of that trouble.

9. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

But Jacob, *i. e.*, the Jews, shall serve, not the king of Babylon, but the royal son of David, their own king Messiah. This would be really serving the Lord their God, both because this king Messiah is himself God, and because he receives his kingdom from the Father. Both modes of expression are used in the Scriptures. According to his oft-repeated promise the Lord will raise up this glorious king for them in his own due time. See the same phraseology, Hosea 3: 5, Ezek. 34: 23, 24, and 37: 24, and the same essential ideas in 2 Sam. 7: 12–16, Ps. 2: 6–8, and 89: 19–37.

10. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make *him* afraid.

That Jacob and Israel are grouped together in this promise looks to the restoration of the true Israel without respect to the revolt and separation into two kingdoms. We should quite miss the sense of this promise if we were to restrict it to the restoration of the ten tribes in the literal sense from their Assyrian exile.

11. For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but

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I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

Remarkably those nations, Assyria and Chaldea, that once scattered and enslaved the Hebrew people, have long since become extinct. Their great cities are utterly desolate. But God's ancient people still exist, and, what is more, the true Israel has already grown so as to pervade the great civilized nations of the world with the name of Christ. The primary reference here is to the continued preservation of the Hebrew people.——"Correct thee in measure," means, with justice only, according to *its* rule, and hence not excessively, and not to the extent of extermination.

12. For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise *is* incurable, *and* thy wound *is* grievous.

13. *There is* none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines.

This does not mean here that the wound of Judah is beyond the power of God to heal, but only that it is beyond her own power, or the power of any of her human helpers and friends.—— There is a blending of unlike figures here, the physician and the legal counselor; the one to bind up her wounds; the other to plead her cause before a civil tribunal. She had neither.

14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; *because* thy sins were increased.

15. Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow *is* incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: *because* thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.

"Thy lovers" are those heathen nations with whom Judah had played the harlot, in the sense of importing their idols and practicing their idolatries, and perhaps making forbidden political alliances with them. All these forsake and fail her in the hour of need.——The clause, "Because thy sins were increased," means not merely that they were greater than they had been before, but that they were *very* many and *very* great. Her case was (as to herself) incurable, and the Lord's judgments upon her were fearfully severe, *because* of her many and great sins.

16. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.

17. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called

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thee an Outcast, *saying*, this *is* Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

The logical connection indicated by "therefore" is this: Because thy case is desperate, past all help from thyself, and because thy lovers—the heathen whose friendship thou wert seeking, and whose gods thou wert serving—all fail thee, I will myself undertake for thee—will devour those that devoured thee, will drive into exile those who have exiled thee, and spoil those that have spoiled thee. But unto thee will I restore health in place of thy sickness, and healing in place of thy wounds, moved to this by jealousy for mine own great name, because the nations have taunted thee as an outcast, and called thee "that Zion for whom no man cares."

18. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

19. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

The promise of restoration is here renewed in slightly differing phrase, but in the same general sense.——"Captivity," as usual, in the sense of captives. The city shall be rebuilt on her original hill ["heap"], although this word rendered "heap" may mean pile of ruins. "Hill" is its better established and more usual sense. In the remote future, and through the spiritual fulfillment of these precious promises, the city of God shall be immensely enlarged, beautified, and glorified. Externally considered, the restored temple and city under Zerubbabel, and perhaps even under Herod the Great, never reached its magnificence in the days of Solomon. The joy and peace of the restored people in the days of Zerubbabel, and of the prophet Zechariah, were memorable rather as a token and pledge of Messianic times and blessings, than as being in themselves very great, either absolutely or relatively to the times of David and Solomon.——When we can not find an adequate fulfillment for a prophecy like this in its external and literal application, we are certainly justified in assuming its outlook onward to the better, brighter days of King Messiah, and especially so when, as here, this King Messiah is manifestly present to the prophet's thought. (See v. 9.) This view of the passage before us is supported by various parallel passages, in which the multiplying and glorifying of the future Israel stands among the prominent features of Messianic prophecy. (Compare Ezek. 37: 26, and 36: 37, 38, and Zech. 10: 8–10.)

20. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their

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congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

21. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who *is* this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

22. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Their children shall come into settled and precious relations to the Lord their God, enjoying the full blessings of his covenant even as of old in the best days of their nation. And so of the masses of the people, "their congregation." The highest idea which a Jew could form of prosperity was precisely this—a state like that of their best days under David and Solomon. It would be a great thing for the exiles to have rulers and princes yet again *from among themselves*, kings of their own blood and not of foreign birth arbitrarily set over them by a foreign power. It would be yet another rich blessing that God would draw their rulers very near to himself, to rule like David after God's own heart, and not like Ahab and Manasseh, serving Baal with all their heart and drawing the people after them.——On the last clause of v. 21, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?" critics differ. Some introduce the word "*otherwise*," and make it somewhat emphatic, thus: "Who would *otherwise, i. e.*, without my especial permission, dare commit his heart to approach unto me?" Who would encounter the peril of such near approach, if I had not myself invited and drawn him near?——Philologically, the great objection to this construction is that the Hebrew has nothing to represent this additional and very essential word "*otherwise*." It is therefore open to the objection of being interpolated, borrowed without apparent reason.——Here are really two main points of inquiry: (*a.*) The sense of the verb, rendered "engaged:" (*b.*) The implied significance of the question, "Who is this?"——(*a.*) In usage, the verb occurs in the sense, to pledge or mortgage (Neh. 5: 31); to become surety for, to guarantee, as Judah his young brother Benjamin (Gen. 43: 9 and 44: 32); to become responsible for another's debts (Prov. 11: 15 and 17: 18). The one idea common to all these cases is that of committing one's self to another in special covenant. But in the case before us the action of the verb terminates upon one's own heart with reference to making approach to God. Hence it would seem that the sense must be to pledge one's own heart, to covenant with one's self, solemnly committing and earnestly purposing and endeavoring to approach near to God.——(*b.*) It remains to consider the import of the question, "*Who is this*, thus committing his heart to come near to God?"——It is supposable that this question is one of surprise, astonishment, that any sinful mortal should dare to approach; or one of rebuke and repulsion, as if to bid him begone

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from my presence; or one of offended or at least invaded dignity, yet inquiring what position does this intruder hold—what rank of honor—that he should thus presume to come near to me?——But all these constructions of the question must be ruled out as being utterly foreign from the course of thought and flow of feeling throughout this chapter and the following, and we must regard the question as implying on the part of God a joyous welcome to him who thus pledges his heart to draw near to God, the spirit of it being analogous to that in chap. 31: 20: "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?" In their nature these questions as to Ephraim do not call for a categorical answer; Yes, or no. They are simply the outburst of parental emotion, joyfully recognizing the almost forgotten or obliterated relation, and gladly welcoming the prodigal home to the bosom of his father. So in this verse the thought of God is, "How precious to me to have my people, and especially their rulers, commit and pledge their heart to *come near* and to *live near* to me!" Are they coming? How will my heart greet them with its glad welcome?"——We might say the question is not categorical, but *is* emotional; it does not ask for the name or the condition of those who commit the heart to draw near to God. It only expresses the intense emotion of the speaker in view of their coming.——In favor of this construction let it be noted that it requires no word like "else," "otherwise," to be supplied. It has its analogy in this same portion of Scripture as above cited (chap. 31: 20). It is in harmony with the strain of this prophecy, and may we not also say, is in harmony with the loving, tender heart of our divine Father?——"Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God," is the crowning promise, full of richest significance, most compactly expressed. They shall meet all the relations of a people peculiarly the Lord's. He will be every thing to them that a God can be or need be. What can be better than this?

23. Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.

24. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

With only slight variations these words occurred and were explained above (chap. 23: 19, 20). There they looked to the judgments of God brought on the land and cities of Judah for their sins through the agency of the Chaldeans. Here they must be taken in the same sense and with the same application. In this view they are parallel to vs. 5–7, and are introduced here for their moral bearing on the hearts of the exiles, who amid the richest promises of mercy must not forget how terrible God's judgments have been upon their countrymen for their great sins against him. The last clause, "In the latter days ye shall consider it," intimates

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the reason for introducing these verses here. It is wholesome and well to think of those fearful judgments even in the latter days of promise and hope.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter continues the same subject, freshly glowing with promise and hope for the exiles. Remarkably the discourse is of Israel and Ephraim throughout vs. 1–22. (See vs. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 18, 21); and then of Judah (vs. 23–26), and finally of both Israel and Judah jointly (vs. 27–40). This fact I take, not as a prediction of the literal restoration of the ten tribes to Canaan, which would be all too little for promises so great and withal would quite miss the Messianic tone and bearing of this entire portion (chap. 30 and 31); but the fact should be taken as an index of the great depth of God's love and of the wealth of his purposed blessings for the kingdom of his anointed.

1. At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

"God of all the families of Israel" fitly introduces a passage which speaks definitely of Israel and Ephraim, and seems designed to indicate a great enlargement and increase of the visible church and kingdom of the Messiah.

2. Thus saith the LORD, The people *which were* left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; *even* Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

"The people left of the sword" are those who escaped the sword of the Chaldeans and were taken away into captivity. The eye of God followed these survivors with tender concern as the seed from which a remnant should be saved according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah, chap. 24. That they found grace (divine mercy and compassion) "in the wilderness" alludes historically to the Exodus from Egypt, and to the kindness shown the people in that wilderness life of forty years. Note the language, Num. 10: 33–36: "The ark went before them in the three days' journey to search out *a resting-place* for them," etc. Similar allusions may be seen Hos. 2: 14, and also in Isa. 63: 11–14, especially in its last verse: "As a beast goeth down into the valley, so the Spirit of the Lord causeth him to rest;" said with reference to the rest given the people in their wilderness life. There was a striking analogy between the exodus from Egypt into the wilderness where the Lord met with his people so manifestly, and this exodus from

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the land of Canaan into and through the great wilderness that lay between their country and Babylon. Through this latter wilderness the Lord led those captives, conducting them to a peaceful repose in Chaldea, and watching over them for good, till in due time he could bring them home again. The same moral lies in each history. It is no great evil to go into a wilderness, provided only that the Lord leads you, and leads from a state of sinning and turmoil to a state of peace and rest.

3. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.

The people are introduced as speaking here. In the latter part of the verse, they cite the words of the Lord. The word rendered "of old," usually refers to place, and means *from afar;* but can be used of *time*, as our translation has it here. The sense of place would not be bad. The Lord appeared in the remote distance as one repelled and withdrawn because of my sins; yet he reveals himself from afar with these precious words, affirming his enduring love.——The last clause, rendered "With loving-kindness have I drawn thee," admits of a different construction, thus: Therefore have I *drawn out*, protracted, and prolonged my loving-kindness toward thee. The verb is used in both senses; in the latter sense, Ps. 36: 4: "Prolong thy loving-kindness," etc. In the former (that of our translation), in Hosea 11: 4: "I *drew* them with cords of a man, with bands of love." I incline to the latter—the construction given in the English version, both because the suffix to the verb is more naturally, "I have drawn *thee*," than "I have drawn out *toward* thee," and because there seems to be a tacit allusion to Hos. 11: 4: "With loving-kindness have I drawn thee." ——A great moral truth lies in this passage so construed, viz., that the main power which humbles man's pride, softens his hard heart, and makes him recoil in sorrow and shame from sinning, comes through his apprehension of God's love as manifested in Christ and his cross. It is love that draws the fearful or stubborn soul to the feet of divine mercy.

4. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

5. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat *them* as common things.

6. For there shall be a day, *that* the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.

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The rebuilding promised here shall be with joy and gladness, in the fullness of the true Christian life. So when the gospel first made its power felt, "there was great joy in that city," *i. e.*, in this very city, Samaria. (See Acts 8: 5–8.) "And they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." (Acts 2: 46.) In the phrase, "The planters shall plant and shall eat them as common things," there are really two points involved: (1.) That the same men who plant shall enjoy the fruits; and (2.) That they shall observe the Jewish law which made the first fruits sacred to God for the priests, and then having offered to God these first fruits, they shall continue to enjoy its future fruits for themselves and families. On the first point, note that one form of imprecating the curse of the Lord upon the people was, "Ye shall plant, but another shall eat the fruits" (*e. g.*, Deut. 28: 30, and 20: 6). On the other hand, to plant and also eat, indicated blessing (as Isa. 65: 21–23). As to the second point, see the law of first fruits (Deut. 26: 1–10, and 18: 4, and Num. 18: 12, 13, etc).——The law of fruit trees is in Lev. 19: 23–25. After the first fruits had been appropriated to God a specified time, the husbandman made those fruits *common*, *i. e.*, enjoyed them for himself and family, as no longer sacred in the sense of being set apart for the priests. ——In v. 6, that the watchmen of Ephraim should say, "Let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God," indicates a state of feeling in perfect contrast with that produced by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12: 26–33), and which prevailed mainly during the revolt, and has been perpetuated in a very intense form in the Samaritan community from the captivity of the ten tribes onward to this day. The reader will readily recall the Samaritan feeling in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah; in the New Testament age also, and even in our own time among the small remnant of the old Samaritan people who still occupy their ancient city. But God's grace loves to triumph over the most inveterate prejudices, and to scatter mountains of difficulty as chaff before the whirlwind. No words could represent a greater and more benign change in national feeling than these: Samaria saying through her spiritual watchmen, "Let us go up to Zion to worship, for our own God is there!" Isaiah (2: 1–4), and Micah (4: 1, 2), and Zechariah (8: 20–23) predict that heathen nations shall come up to Zion to learn there of God and his law; but the greater triumph over national prejudices, ancient as the nation itself, lies in this case. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"

7. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

We can not fail to notice how much this verse and indeed the greater part of this chapter is in the glowing, joyous strain of Isaiah. The blessedness and glory of Zion's latter days thrill the

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prophet's heart, and he can not do less than call for pæans of praise to God, and implore men to publish these glad tidings among the great nations of the earth, and stir up the people of every land to prayer and to praise.

8. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither:

9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

To speak of "bringing them from the north country" links the glorious future to the sad and suffering past, showing that the Church of God is one in every age, and that from the remnant of these exiles God proposes to evolve a more glorious Church that shall embosom the mightiest nations of the earth. When he so wills it and lends his hand to do it, it will be easy to bring the captives home; the blind and the lame, the enfeebled and those of most delicate situation—all alike are borne along with ease as if on the strong arms of God's ministering angels. What are human weaknesses, and what is a dreary and vast wilderness to him or to his people when he stands for their help! He can make their way straight and smooth, and can pour rivers of water alongside their wilderness path; so be it their hearts are broken and humbled before him.——It is beautiful and very significant to see the returning exiles weeping and praying as they set forth and press onward in their long desert journey; but God turns their mourning to joy; makes their desert pathway a blooming paradise; and gives as his reason that great truth—good for all his people in every age: "For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born." Does not the great God love his people? When their hearts are humble and tender before him, is any thing too much for him to do for their prosperity and joy?

10. Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd *doth* his flock.

11. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of *him that was* stronger than he.

12. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of

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the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

13. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

14. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.

It adds to the interest of this magnificent strain of promise that God would have it proclaimed among all the Gentile nations, and published in the distant islands, *i. e.*, in all the countries lying beyond the great sea. Let them all behold and see what God will do for his people! In v. 12, the question arises, *Who* shall "come and sing in the height of Zion?" Is it the remnant of Israel only? Or does the promise embrace all the Gentiles as well? I incline to the latter view, especially because it seems demanded by the lofty strain of this entire passage, and more particularly by the closely parallel prophecies of Isaiah 2, and Mich. 4, where we have the same leading verb, rendered "*flow together*," spoken of the confluence of nations to Zion because they see that the Lord is there, pouring forth his most munificent blessings. The primary and literal sense of the words here is, that the people pressed together unto Zion to get the earthly good which the Lord so liberally provides there, wheat, wine, oil, etc.; but it scarcely need be said that we must look beyond the outward and sensual to the inward and spiritual, and think not of food for the body but of food for the soul; of that which will meet man's deepest, greatest wants, and make his soul as a watered garden, and cause him to sorrow no more at all.——With our eye on the extreme corruption of the priesthood in the times of our prophet, we shall better conceive the richness of this promise "to satiate the soul of the priests with fatness." Blessings which should thoroughly fill *their* souls with divine grace would be fraught with untold good to Zion.

15. Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were* not.

16. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

17. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

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Ramah, the home of the prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 7: 17), was very near the sepulcher of Rachel, as may be seen in 1 Sam. 10: 2. Samuel said to Saul, "When thou art departed from me this day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulcher in the border of Benjamin." On the poetic conception in this passage, J. D. Michaelis makes this comment: "An exquisite figure. Rachel, during all her life ardently desirous of children, dying in child-birth and buried on the border of Benjamin, lifts her maternal head from her tomb, looks around on the wide waste of ruin, and sees not one of her children in all the land! She pours out her heart in most bitter tears; then God appears for her consolation." ——It was indeed exceedingly natural for the prophet to think of Rachel who so loved her children as being inconsolable when she saw them all gone from their native land. Her sorrow doubtless represented the sorrow of many Hebrew mothers, then bewailing their dead and mourning the desolation of their long-loved country. To hearts so borne down with grief, the words of divine consolation come as cold water to a thirsty soul. "Thy works shall be rewarded," seems to mean: All thou hast borne of pain and grief, and all thou hast done with toil in thy love for Zion, shall find its due reward. Thy children shall return again; thine end is full of hope; a glorious future awaits thy sons and daughters.——So timely and so precious are the words of God's consolations.

18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus;* Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed *to the yoke:* turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou *art* the LORD my God.

Having promised the return of the people from their exile, the prophet here speaks of the manner and spirit of this return. The essential point in it is, that *the heart is touched.* It begins with serious thought upon God's chastising hand under a conviction of personal stubbornness and guilt, and with some deep moving of heart toward return to God. With exquisite beauty and force, the Lord here represents himself as hearing the plaintive, solitary moans of Ephraim as he begins to think upon his ways and sets his face toward his long-forsaken God: "*I have surely heard.*" Then let no sinner imagine that God cares not for his soul, and never takes note of his penitential tears. If only those tears betoken humiliation, confession, sorrow, and shame for sin, then surely, the eye and the heart of God are upon them, and those bemoanings of sin and folly will come up into his ear.——An untamed and unbroken bullock fitly represents the stubborn, refractory spirit of the unhumbled sinner. He rebels against the judgments of the Lord, "kicks against the pricks" of his chastising goad, and thus compels the Lord to yet sterner blows. But sober thought comes at last, and with it an entire change in his views of himself and of his God. Is not his soul overwhelmed now with shame and grief? O, might he only turn to God thor

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oughly and acceptably! Nothing can more befit his case than this uplifting of his heart in prayer: "Turn thou me; for thou art the Lord my God."——In the clause rendered, "And I shall be turned," it is by no means clear that the original should be taken in the passive sense. It is not the passive form of the verb. It should naturally and literally be rendered, "That I may turn;" or, "And I will turn." The spirit of the whole passage is, "Help me, that I may effectually return to thee;" "Aid me in giving my whole heart to thee; for thou art the Lord my God, and I can not rest till I am wholly and evermore thy servant." Maurer, an acute German critic who follows the philological demands of the text rather than any theological views, renders it "Turn me,* that I may myself turn; aid me in the pursuit of piety." The passage certainly should not exclude God's own precious, ever-honored agency in the sinner's conversion; neither should it exclude the sinner's own agency. The truth does not lie *between* these two sets of views; it lies in admitting them both.

19. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

In this verse we hear Ephraim. The word "turn" appears here in the same form as before (v. 18)—not properly passive but intransitive: "Surely after my turning," etc. The word "*repent*" refers here to his sorrow and grief for his sin and not properly to the change of his external life, nor strictly to his change of will in turning to God. It is parallel in sense to "smiting the thigh." ——"After that I was instructed," *i. e.*, *made to know* and understand the case. Luther renders this, "After I was made wiser." Gesenius and Maurer say, "After I was taught by bitter experience; by God's chastising rod," as in Prov. 10: 9: "He that lives perversely shall be made to know," *i. e.*, shall be punished. The context strongly favors this sense.——"I smote upon my thigh," *i. e.*, in token of extreme grief and indignation against myself. So Ezek. 21: 12.——"The reproach of my youth" is the disgrace of his early sins. The Lord chastised him for those sins in putting him to shame before the nations because of them. In this sense he bore the reproach of his youth.——Such reminiscences of the sins of one's impenitent life may well fill every pardoned soul with most poignant grief and shame. How can the Lord forgive such sins? So we feel whenever we see our own sins in their true colors.——Since Ephraim here personates the whole people, "his bearing the reproach of his youth" implies that in a certain sense the sins of many generations of idolatry and apostasy from God were visited upon that generation which was sent into captivity

* Ut ego me convertam.

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and upon their successors until their restoration. Our Lord represents the Jews of his day as bearing the accumulated guilt and blood of many generations of persecutors and apostates from God (Matt. 23: 35, 36.) So after long delay in the infliction of judgment on a guilty nation, the time comes at last and the settlement involves an account running back long ages. The sins of the nation's youthful days are brought up to remembrance, and the one generation then living bears the reproach of those early sins. In the matter of retribution the nation stands before God as an individual person. With individuals it is well known that the common law of retribution in this world is to wait long and let the account swell up to fearful proportions, and then when justice can forbear no longer its sword smites. So in the case of a nation.

20. *Is* Ephraim my dear son? *is he* a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

As already intimated in notes on chap. 30: 21, I understand these interrogatives rather to indicate strong affection than to ask information or to call for any definite answer. They are the outburst and overflow of strong emotion. The Lord would represent that his heart is deeply moved with love to his long wandering prodigal son. No better comment on this verse can be given than Christ gives in that inimitable story of the prodigal (Luke 15: 11–24): "But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." These testimonies to the love felt by the infinite God toward his once wayward, now returning, children, manifested in a manner so touching, are inexpressibly precious. What pardoned sinner has not felt them to be a glorious paradise to his trembling, aching heart—a wealth of blessings above all other good ever known in the experiences of earth?——Rosenmüller and Maurer suppose that these questions, "Is Ephraim my dear son?" etc., indicate God's wonder and surprise at himself that he should find his heart so moved with love and pity toward one a long time so perverse as Ephraim. It is not altogether clear to me that they are right in this.——In the phrase, "For since I spake against him," etc., the word rendered "since" properly means *as often as*. Hence the meaning must be, How often soever I have spoken against him, my love has returned, and I have found myself remembering him again with intense affection.——With the Hebrews the bowels were thought of as the seat of the emotions and affections. Accordingly here the Lord says, "Therefore my bowels moan or are moved for him."——This inimitably precious passage closes fitly with the promise, "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Nothing can be more sure than God's mercy to the really humbled penitent. His infinite love forbids that mercy should fail to reach such a sinner. The showing of such mercy to such souls

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is the chief delight he finds in this revolted world. O, would sinners only believe this, then would they not turn from all sinning and press to his open arms to pour out their warm tears of sorrow for sin and of gratitude for such free and abundant pardon!—— As applied to Ephraim, a nation in captivity, the significance of this passage is that the personal repentance of the people individually in large numbers would be the condition of God's restoring mercy. While the mass are in their sins, unhumbled and impenitent, there can be no restoration. The grace of God must reach many individual hearts before he can turn their captivity as a nation and bring them home.——In the yet wider application of this passage to the whole visible Church and to men of every class, the same lesson is taught. Penitence is the antecedent condition of all gospel blessings. When masses of men humble themselves low before God and return penitently to seek his mercy, then his mercies are poured abroad with lavish hand and millennial blessings make glad the nations.

21. Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps: set thy heart toward the highway, *even* the way *which* thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

This verse contemplates the children of Ephraim as about to return from their captivity. Thought of as crossing the great Arabian desert where there were no traces of old paths, the Lord exhorts them to set up way-marks and heaps of stones which might guide them in their return.

22. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

The last clause of this verse has been interpreted variously. The older interpreters make the woman the virgin mother Mary; the man, the human race; the event or fact affirmed, the birth of the child Jesus, who compasses the race as their Savior. The objection to this interpretation is not that the resulting doctrine is not a truth, but that these words do not contain it. For the Hebrew word for "woman" is (in sense) neither virgin nor mother; and the word for "man" is not the human race nor the finally saved. Worse still is the fact, that in this construction the salvation of the race would be ascribed rather to the virgin mother than to Jesus.——Very able critics have plausibly given the passage this sense: The verb "compass" (they say) has here (as in Deut. 32: 10) the meaning, to *surround* for purposes of protection, the sense being, not that women constitute the standing army, but rather that the world reaches such a state of peace under the prevalence of the gospel that woman *might* readily afford to man all the military protection which society needs. Men "learn war no more." This new thing so construed (they truly say) is precisely one of the

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prominent results of gospel power upon this otherwise warring world.——The main objection to this is, that it seems far-fetched, and is not precisely the thing affirmed; for it is one thing to say, woman shall protect man in the sense of military defense; and quite another to say, there will be no need of any military force at all. To make the passage affirm the former and yet mean the latter, is by no means a simple and natural construction.——There remains yet another construction which harmonizes so well with the context, both the preceding and the following, and which accounts so happily for the peculiar turn of expression, that it commends itself to our confidence.——Let it be borne in mind that "virgin of Israel" (v. 21) and "backsliding daughter" (v. 22) represent the people of God, yet thought of here as having been wandering from God, "*going about*" after idol-gods in guilty apostasy from their own glorious Maker and husband. The word for man is a rare one,* which is not man thought of as frail, mortal; but as mighty, the superior, the lord. The word "compass" means *to go round about*, yet not in the sense of a guilty wanderer from God, but in the far better sense of soliciting the hand, wooing the heart, seeking the love of her rightful lord. Now for woman to woo man is "a new thing in the earth," inasmuch as it reverses the common law of society under which man woos the woman and not woman the man. In this special case it is infinitely right that God's covenant people, personified as a woman, should solicit the love of her rightful Lord her Maker, who has condescended to become her husband. So the Psalmist sung (45: 10, 11): "Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house: so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy lord, and worship thou him." It is also a new thing in the earth, inasmuch as it involves a new state of heart in the professed Church of God, all unlike the state then contemplated in Israel. And furthermore, the language, "Created a new thing" probably looks toward the similar words of Isaiah; "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;" "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy" (Isa. 65: 17, 18).——Note also that the point of the argument in this appeal to God's lately wandering people is this: Why will ye continue longer to wander thus? for lo, a glorious wealth of promise is here before you; far better days are in the plan and in the heart of your God. He has purposed to renew the moral state of his Zion most gloriously, so that instead of perpetually going about after other lovers, she will go about (in the sense of seeking to win the love of) her own divine Lord. Let these foreshowings of God's great mercy to Zion make her ashamed of her guilty apostasy, and reënkindle her love for her true and ever-glorious husband and Lord. Isaiah uses the same argument upon a celebrated prophecy of Messianic times. (See Isa. 2: 1–4, with v. 5.) Yet further, let the reader notice that the next verse (the following

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context) assumes this identical moral change. The current speech in the land of Judah shall be, "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness." When Zion heartily woos and wins the love of her Lord, she will be the native home of justice and of holiness—the former expressing her relations of life and heart toward man; the latter toward God. This construction of v. 22, is therefore in harmony with the strain of v. 23, both involving a radical change in the moral state of Zion toward her own divine Redeemer and husband.

23. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, *and* mountain of holiness.

The reader will notice that here the prophecy turns to Judah and conceives of her as coming back from her captivity. The special thing she shall say, "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness," has great significance, in view of the fact that before the captivity "justice had fallen in her streets and equity could not enter." Her last kings were cruel tyrants of oppression. (See chap. 22: 13–17.) The Lord had often exhorted those kings to execute righteousness and justice, but they would not hear (chap. 21: 12–14).

24. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they *that* go forth with flocks.

25. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.

26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

The mental state in which divine revelations were made to the prophets is in some respects analogous to sleep, and coming out of it into this living external world is analogous to awaking from sleep to the new consciousness and outward activities of common life. At this stage the Lord suspended the prophetic afflatus and as the prophet awaked, he seemed to himself to have been sleeping sweetly. A sense as of pleasant dreams remained with its grateful refreshings.

27. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.

28. And it shall come to pass, *that* like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build and to plant, saith the LORD.

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The first of these verses promises a great increase of population, as if men like corn were to be raised from seed, and the Lord had gone forth to sow the ground plentifully.——The next verse, following the figure already familiar in this prophet (see chap. 1: 10 and 18: 7, 9) shows that the Lord will now employ the agencies of his providence in protecting and building up, even as before, in casting down and blotting out their nation.

29. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

30. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

This expression was doubtless proverbial. It occurs also in Ezek. 18: 2, 3. The declaration, "They shall say no more," might, in itself, mean either that they would not *feel disposed* to say this any more, in the way of reflecting upon the government of God; or that there should be no longer any occasion to say it in the sense that they should no longer "bear the reproach of their youth" (v. 19). V. 30 strongly implies that the latter is the sense here. The season of divine judgment on the nation for its sins has now past. During this season the nation did suffer the retributions that had been accumulating for ages, but in the better days here contemplated, no such retribution for their past sins, or for the sins of former generations, is to be experienced.——The question will sometimes arise, How can it be just for the Lord to let national guilt accumulate age after age, and then send his retributive judgments for it upon some one generation?——Briefly stated, the answer is, God never punishes the people of any nation more than their individual sins deserve. Hence, viewing the nation as made up of individuals, no man of them suffers beyond the measure of justice. But, on the other hand, the Lord does not attempt to administer a *perfect* moral government over men in *this world*. It is imperfect in this, that retribution fails to come up to the measure of full and perfect justice. The next world is designed to supplement this, and to fill out what is left unfinished and imperfect here. Now God's government over nations as such, is of this same external sort, and being restricted to the present world, partakes of the same imperfect character. Nations have often a long life running through many generations of men. During several successive generations, the nation goes on sinning, and the Lord waits on them patiently, and presses them earnestly with appliances leading toward repentance. These generations receive far less than their relative and righteous share of retribution. If the people wax worse, and God's agencies toward repentance fail, the time will come when signal retribution must fall. Of course this must fall with terrible severity on some one generation or more. That long national life is a sort of unit before God. The nation is one great moral person, and so considered, its hour of

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retribution must at length come. Then a great moral lesson is impressed on all the nations of the earth. The judgments inflicted make every ear tingle. The former generations received far less than they deserved: this generation nothing more than its individual men deserve; and the nation, considered as a long living individual, only what it righteously deserves. Great moral ends are thus answered, although this form of moral government does not aim to be perfect in this world, in the sense of meting out to each individual precisely the amount of penalty due to his sins.

31. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33. But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The remaining verses of this chapter have but one theme—the richer spiritual blessings of the gospel age, surpassing those of the age before Christ came. They are presented under the phrase, "a new covenant."——In the exposition of this passage we need first to consider the precise sense of this word "*covenant.*"—— As used for a relation between man and man, its well-known meaning is, a compact, an agreement, the terms of which may be proposed mutually and at least must be mutually assented to and made mutually binding. This assumes a substantial equality between the contracting parties. But in a covenant between God and his people, the disparity between the parties is so great, that a covenant must assume the nature of a *proposition* and *promise* on the part of God, to be assented to by his people. For, we can not for a moment think of man as dictating the terms, or even as proposing or modifying them. The terms of the arrangement can come from God alone. Hence, our usual designation, *e. g.*, "economy," "dispensation," "divine plan," approximate closely to the true idea of "covenant," as here used. In the first covenant the Lord *proposed* to Israel to enter into relations of special alliance, service and trust with himself, and prescribed minutely the terms and conditions of this relationship. He delivered them from their bondage in Egypt, and on the basis of this deliverance exhorted them to become his people, and promised on his part to become their God. They assented, and then he gave them his moral law of ten commandments, and next his ceremonial and civil institutes

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which were designed as means of religious culture and of protection specially against idolatry and generally against sin. As is indicated in our passage, those agencies were mainly external; the law itself was written on tables of stone. But the "new covenant" in its agencies for begetting and maintaining the religious life was to be inward and spiritual. The Lord would write it, not on stone tables, but on living hearts. There can be no doubt that this refers to the great, the special and distinguishing feature of the gospel age—*the gift of the Spirit.* By this divine agency the law of God is written on the very hearts of men: "They are all taught of God" (Isa. 54: 13). They are taught the spiritual nature and bearings of the divine law as never otherwise, and, what is yet more, they not only understand it but they *love* it, and joyfully obey it. They respond to its perceived claims with joyful promptness, and find their supreme delight in learning and doing the will of God. As here so tersely and beautifully expressed, the result of this new covenant and of this writing of God's law upon their heart is that the Lord becomes their God and they his people. God is theirs and they are his. All that God is, all that he can do for his creatures, he becomes to them and does for them. All that is involved in being his own—controlled and used by him they become toward their God. These relations are exceedingly broad and intensely rich and blessed. God gives them his love and protection; and they give him their heart's best love and the whole service of their life.——As will appear more fully in v. 34, this new covenant makes special account of the forgiveness of sin: "For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." This forgiveness implies the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and shows that this sacrifice also was embraced in the new covenant. So that under this phrase must be included the great essential blessings of the gospel dispensation—the gift of God's Son as teacher and sacrifice for sin; and the gift of God's Spirit as also a spiritual teacher and an agent of spiritual power on human hearts unto holiness.——The scope of this passage puts this new covenant somewhat in contrast with the old. The new is not like the old. Its prominent features are different; its main agencies are new and peculiar. This must not be pressed too far, for it can not imply that there was no forgiveness of sin under the old economy, or that there was no Holy Spirit there. But it does imply that the prominent religious agencies in that were external; were in the letter; made up largely of ritual forms; the law itself being written on stone: while under the new covenant the great religious agencies are the mission and death of Christ and the permanent work of the Divine Spirit on human hearts.——The last clause of v. 32, which reads in our version, "Though I was a husband unto them," Hengstenberg translates, "But I marry them to me, saith the Lord." In his view it pertains to the new covenant and not to the old; *i. e.*, he understands it as part of the description given in v. 33, and not of that which is given in v. 32. This seems to me unnatural. The description of the new cove-

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nant begins in v. 33. Besides, the tense of the verb "I was a husband," is past, not present—precisely corresponding to the tense of the English version, "*They brake.*" This verb denotes the marriage relation with the accessory idea of lordship. When God speaks of himself as the husband of his people nothing can be more fitting than the term which most distinctly carries the thought of his superiority and rightful authority and dominion.——The Hebrew reader would notice that this verb ["Baal"] is the name of that celebrated Phenician idol which so fearfully ensnared the Hebrew people. His name carried the idea of lord, ruler. May it be supposed that the name is chosen here with a tacit reference to the guilty homage which Israel so long rendered to Baal, as if the Lord would say, "They brake my covenant by worshiping the idol Baal when I was to them the true *Baal*, their only rightful Lord and husband."——Yet another interpretation which renders this clause, "I rejected or despised them," will be considered in the sequel.

34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The first clause, "They shall not teach one another," must be taken, not as prohibition, but as prediction. Still the question arises, Why shall they not teach one another? The answer must be one or both of these two; either because knowledge is so universal that there is no longer occasion for teaching; or that God's teachings have superseded man's. The reason assigned here—"for they shall *all* know me," even from the least and up to the greatest—leads the mind to the former as the ruling thought. And yet the connection with the verse previous, which makes the agency of the Spirit so prominent, suggests that relatively far less teaching agency is left for men under the new covenant than under the old. The aim here is to exalt the Spirit's agency, and justly; for what can be more precious! What so surpassingly rich! How utterly does all human teaching fade into insignificance before it!—— Yet we must regard these statements as rather comparative and relative than absolute. In my view the Lord does not mean to say that in the best millennial days there shall be no teaching, *e. g.*, of children, "the least of them," but only that relatively to the old dispensation the Divine Spirit is a teacher so glorious and so perfect as to eclipse all human agencies. See the same antithesis carried out under a somewhat different figure by Paul (2 Cor. 3), where the Mosaic system stands over against the gospel scheme, and the superior results of the latter are made prominent. ——The logical connection of the last clause should be noted: "*For* I will forgive their iniquity," etc. When all sin is so freely forgiven, and so utterly removed even from the remembrance of our covenant Father, it will be his joy to pour forth his Spirit in

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its fullness. The atoning sacrifice of Christ prepared the way for the mission of the Spirit. So great a favor to men as this gift of the Spirit could not be manifested till after Jesus had suffered, had risen, and had been glorified. (See John 7: 39.)——What is said in this passage (vs. 31–34) of the new covenant, should be compared with Hebrews 8: 8–12. The writer to the Hebrews quotes from the Septuagint precisely, and hence gives a different translation of the last clause of v. 32. Where our English version of Jeremiah has, "Though I was a husband to them," the Septuagint and Heb. 8: 9 have, "And I regarded them not." To the English reader it will seem very strange that two meanings, apparently so unlike, should be given to the same word. The case stands thus.——As above remarked, the Hebrew word in question is *Baal*. This means (1.) To be Lord or Master over any thing; to have authority or dominion; to possess. (2.) To be a husband, with the oriental idea of possessing paramount authority. Then (3.), says Gesenius, "*probably*" to disdain, to reject; and cites as cases of this usage only two texts, both from Jeremiah, viz., chap. 3: 14, and 31: 32. He also suggests that this sense has some support in the fact that sundry Arabic verbs of ruling have also the secondary sense of despising, disdaining. Moreover, some regard is had to the authority of the Septuagint as a very ancient translation.——As to these cited cases from Jeremiah, the passage (chap. 3: 14) goes strongly against this Septuagint sense of disdain, reject. Thus, suppose we read "Turn, O backsliding children" (for I disdain and reject you), "and I will take you, one of a city and two of a family, and bring you to Zion." The logic of this is very hard. Even if you put it in a past sense, "For I *have* disdained or rejected you," it still does not present the sort of argument which we naturally expect here. The sense of our English translation is incomparably better: "For I am married to you." I am your rightful husband, and I joyfully recognize this fact, and beg you to return again to its delightful and precious relations. We can not, therefore, reject this sense to adopt that of the Septuagint in this passage. And if not here, then not in chap. 31: 32, for it is scarcely supposable that Jeremiah used this word in two very unlike senses, *i. e.*, in chap. 3: 14, in the sense of being a husband, and in chap. 31: 32, in the sense of disdaining and rejecting. In this latter passage I grant that the connection would readily admit the sense of the Septuagint. It also readily admits the sense of our English translation. I am brought, therefore, to the conclusion that the authority for the sense of the Septuagint is exceedingly small; too small to justify its adoption. Fortunately the general sense of the entire passage remains unaffected by this discrepancy in this one clause. Even if the Septuagint and the translation in Hebrews is not sustained by the original of Jeremiah, the general significance and value of the whole passage remains the same.

35. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a

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light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts *is* his name:

36. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever.

37. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

After promises so rich, it is a merciful condescension to the weakness of human faith that God should append such sublime assurances and asseverations. These are made doubly strong by the choice of their terms and figures. We are reminded that the God who gave these glorious promises is he who gave the sun for our light by day, and can not *he* make another sun arise on the darkness of our souls? It is also the same who ordained the courses of the moon and of the stars for our light by night; and can not he break up the otherwise dense and hopeless darkness of the human soul by the rays of heavenly light?——The clause rendered, "Who divideth the sea, when the waves thereof roar," I prefer (following Gesenius) to render, "Who rebukes [and alarms] the sea," and then its waves roar. The tense of the second verb "roar" demands the rendering, "and then," as a thing subsequent to and consequent upon the action of the verb before it. The sense is, "The God who, by his word, can make the waters of the great deep roar and swell into mighty waves." Fitly is he called, in such a connection, "The Lord of Hosts," "Prince of the celestial armies." So far the things said remind us of the great power and beneficence of our God. Then v. 36 declares that those divinely appointed lights in the heavens shall sooner depart and fulfill their mission no more than Israel cease to be a nation before God.——But the term "Israel" must here look beyond the outward to the inward; beyond the "Israel" which is of the flesh to the Israel which is of the Spirit; to the sanctified people of the living God. In the same strain is v. 37: "If ye can measure the heavens above, or search out the foundations of the earth beneath, then may the Lord cast off the seed of Israel for their great sins." Things impossible to be done are adduced to show that this casting off of Israel can never be. The things thus adduced certify to us the vastness of his power who has made these promises, and may be taken as his pledge that Omnipotence can surely accomplish what his love has devised and his veracity stands pledged to perform.——The Lord touches the point of man's worst fear when he says, "I will not cast off Israel for all her great sins." When we think of Israel as representing the visible Church of God, and then look at her great corruptions and the infinite trial the Lord must have felt under her wayward-

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ness and backslidings, it is exceedingly comforting to read this promise and find in it the assurance that the Lord will never cease to have a people, but will purify and discipline, redeem and save, till they shall be a people to his praise, and be fitted to do his appointed work on earth.

38. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.

39. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.

40. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate toward the east, *shall be* holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever.

In these verses Jerusalem, the ancient city of the Lord, represents his Church and kingdom in the latter days. It is here rebuilt, considerably enlarged, and what is much more significant, *so* enlarged as to include the unclean and loathsome localities outside but near its former walls. It now incloses all these, yet not *as* unclean and repulsive, but as now cleansed and made holy to the Lord. That is, the Church of God makes aggressions upon the kingdom of darkness. She goes down into the valley of Sodom, and having cleansed it out, converts it into a paradise. The figure corresponds to Ezekiel's river of waters from under the sanctuary (chap. 47) flowing down into the desert, bearing verdure, fertility, and beauty on its bosom and pouring healing virtue into the Dead Sea. So this enlarged city becomes all "holy to the Lord," and enduring also, "for it shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more forever."——As to the particulars given here, we may note that "the city is to be built *to the Lord*," absolutely for him, and for him alone; for him not in name only but in fact. Then the special localities named here, according to Hengstenberg, are first, the starting point, the well-known "tower of Hananeel," in the north-east quarter of the city; then spanning the north side, the corner gate in the north-west; then the hill—Gareb, *i. e.*, the hill of the leprous, outside of the city on the north-west, the first of the unclean localities; thence to the hill Goath, the place of capital executions, and supposed to be identical with Golgotha, outside the city on the south-west; and then, finally, the whole valley of the son of Hinnom, including Tophet, distinguished as the place of the horrid rites of Baal and Moloch, desecrated by Josiah, defiled by the accumulated filth of the city, and made the very image of hell by its foul abominations of murder and lust; its worms, its filth, and its ever-burning fires. All these defiled places are now embraced in the city built to the Lord, and are made thor-

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oughly holy before him.——How expressive these representations! What can not the grace of God do when it really comes to grapple with the most gigantic sins and sets itself to cleanse the Augean stables of earth's pollutions! Is it indeed true that the gospel will yet avail to wash this sin-stained world from its unutterable abominations and redeem unto holiness those localities where Satan has held his carnival for ages? So this passage testifies. To this the Lord God of Hosts pledges his omnipotence and signifies that when his Spirit shall have written his law on the very hearts of men, the thing *will be done!*——It deserves special notice that these two prophecies illustrate each other. What is promised in the "new covenant" paves the way for what is done in the "new city" built to the Lord. The writing of God's law upon human hearts by his Spirit, supplies the power that is to transform all that is vile and unclean in our world to moral beauty and holiness. The gospel goes down into the deepest sinks of human pollution to diffuse there the sweetness of love and the fragrance of piety—to redeem those wrecks of humanity from the loathsomeness and the curse of sin and restore them to the purity and bliss of paradise.——And shall we not praise God for all this? Shall not the promise and prophecy of it be a joy and a strength to his people in their gospel mission, sustaining their hearts in the "work of faith and the labor of love and the patience of hope" until prophecy shall become history, and "not one good word shall fail of all that the Lord has spoken?"

CHAPTER XXXII.

The date and circumstances of this chapter are distinctly given. The final siege of the city by the Chaldeans was in progress. It was the tenth year of Zedekiah, and the city fell in his eleventh, after a siege of one and a half years (chap. 52: 4–6). Zedekiah had shut up the prophet in prison because of his predictions of the fall of the city and the doom of its king.——The tone of the chapter is in its issue consolatory. It assured the people that the devastation of the country would not be final, but that a remnant would return and fields be again bought, held, and enjoyed in peace and abundance.——Jeremiah's prayer (vs. 16–25), and the Lord's answer (vs. 26–44), bring out fully the great points of the case, the sin on the one hand, and the divine justice and mercy on the other.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which *was* the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar.

2. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jeru-

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salem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which *was* in the king of Judah's house.

3. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it?

4. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes;

5. And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.

This chronology corresponds with other testimony. The first year of Nebuchadnezzar was coincident with the fourth of Jehoiakim (chap. 25: 1), who reigned eleven years (2 Kings 33: 36). Hence Jehoiakim reigned seven years contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar; Jehoiachin a fraction of another; counting eight; so that this king of Babylon had been eight years on his throne when Zedekiah began to reign; and the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar was coincident with the tenth of Zedekiah.——It was not unnatural that these predictions of ruin to the nation and of capture to the king should expose the prophet to the charge of treason, and should lead the princes to regard him a dangerous man. So long as they opposed his policy, and discredited his divine mission, nothing but fear of the people, or fear of the wrath of God, would be likely to restrain them from personal violence against the prophet.

6. And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

7. Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth: for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*.

8. So Hanameel, mine uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that *is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance *is* thine, and the redemption *is* thine; buy *it* for thyself. Then I knew that this *was* the word of the LORD.

The previous verses give us the circumstances of Jeremiah at the time of this transaction. It seems to have had no reference to the king, but was designed to encourage the pious portion of

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the people with the assurance that this pending captivity, though terrible, would yet have an end, and the land be yet repeopled. ——First, the Lord apprised Jeremiah that Hanameel would soon come and say, "Buy my field in Anathoth." Hence, when he came, Jeremiah knew this was from the Lord.——The right of purchase was in the nearest male relative. For the purpose of giving permanence to the location of the several tribes, as well as to restrain the people from removing their residences, the right to alienate their land was carefully restricted by law.

9. And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* seventeen shekels of silver.

10. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed *it*, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances.

11. So I took the evidence of the purchase, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom, and that which was open:

12. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's *son*, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

This passage opens a page in the ancient business usages of the Hebrew people. The conveyance of land was made then, as now, by a written instrument, or rather with duplicate deeds, one sealed to be kept with the greater care, and the other open for more easy reference. The money paid was weighed in scales. Both this weighing and the signing and sealing of the written documents were done in the presence of witnesses. Then, since Jeremiah was at this time in prison, and could not himself take charge of these documents to preserve them, he commits them for preservation to his intimate friend Baruch, who appears elsewhere as his amanuensis (chap. 36: 4).——Some critics have thought the amount paid here, seventeen shekels (one shekel, equal to about ten pennyweights, or two hundred and twenty *grains*), was very small. But we are not told how large the lot was. Besides, in times like these, of imminent national peril, the price of real estate would naturally fall very low. Perhaps the smallness of the sum paid shows how little confidence was felt in the future of the country.

13. And I charged Baruch before them, saying,

14. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

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15. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

An earthen vessel would preserve these documents even if they should be buried in the earth for safe keeping. It was supposed by Jerome that this was the prophet's intention.——V. 15 brings out on divine authority the significance of this whole transaction. It was God's testimony that houses, fields, and vineyards should be again possessed in that land. The force of this testimony will be readily seen by making the supposition that when the Lord sent two angels to Abraham to rescue Lot, he had directed him to go and buy a tract of land in Sodom. No; the gardens and fields of Sodom were never to be used again! But this land though now doomed to ruin, would arise from its desolation and shine again in the beauty of Eden.——Profane history records with admiration a case analogous to this. While Hannibal lay encamped near Rome, one of the staunch old Romans bought at its full current price the land on which his army lay encamped. His faith in Roman courage and prowess was unshaken. Jeremiah's purchase evinced his enduring faith in God. Though he knew the city must be destroyed and the people driven into exile, yet he believed in God that they would yet return and rebuild this city. Moreover, since God himself directed Jeremiah to do this thing, it became God's own promise and prophecy of restoration to their country.

16. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,

17. Ah LORD God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee:

18. Thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: The Great, The Mighty God, The LORD of hosts, *is* his name:

19. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes *are* open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:

20. Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, and in Israel, and among *other* men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day;

21. And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror;

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22. And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey;

23. And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them:

The prophet's mind is deeply exercised by this new revelation, and he therefore most appropriately brings the whole case before God in prayer. This is an admirable specimen of prayer—reverential, humble, trusting, yet inquiring. Most beautifully and fitly does the prophet recognize the great power of Jehovah, his manifold mercies to his people; the leading points in their past history, and the rebellion of the people which had brought on them this impending destruction.

24. Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and behold, thou seest *it*.

25. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.

The prophet here calls the attention of the Lord to the state of the siege and the progress made already by the besiegers. "Behold the mounts"—the huge mounds of earth raised on the outside of the walls, from which the besiegers might hurl their missiles of death over the walls into the city. This was the ancient mode of assaulting walled towns. The prophet regarded the city as practically lost already. "The city *is given* into the hands of the Chaldeans," etc., and yet, strange to say, the Lord had told him to buy real estate in Anathoth, just in the suburbs of the city, and he had done so. But both for himself and for the people he longed to get some more full and definite word about the significance of this transaction.

26. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

27. Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

28. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it:

29. And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses,

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upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger.

The Lord answers. He has power adequate to any result that his wisdom deems it best to secure. The city will indeed, as is already indicated, be given up to the Chaldeans, and they will burn and utterly destroy it. Note here how the judgment points its index finger toward the sin which has brought it down. The Chaldean fires will burn those houses *because* on their roofs the infatuated people had offered incense to Baal.

30. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD.

31. For this city hath been to me *as* a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face;

32. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

33. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching *them*, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.

34. But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it.

35. And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Moloch; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

These verses recite again those provocations of Israel which had aroused the indignation of the Lord. These points have often appeared in the course of Jeremiah's prophecies. Indeed they constitute their burden.

36. And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;

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37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

38. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

But now the Lord most wonderfully appends to this account of the nation's sins his own glorious promises of deliverance. Of this same city whereof we are now saying it must fall, the mercy of God declares, it shall be rebuilt; the people shall be restored out of all the lands whither they have been driven; and once more it shall be their chief mercy that "they shall be my people and I will be their God."

39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

The strain of these promises is exceedingly rich. While they refer primarily to the restoration under Zerubbabel, yet their outlook is far beyond that event. Their spiritual fullness bears us onward into those latter days described so fully in the previous chapter. These great promises are remarkably coincident with those in chap. 31: 33, 34: "They shall be my people and I their God;" "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever," with steadfast unwavering consecration; "Will make an everlasting covenant with them," in contrast with that first covenant which they broke, and it was, therefore, transient; and "I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me." Fear of God in the Old Testament sense is true piety —not differing, therefore, from "writing God's law in the heart" (chap. 31: 33). These phrases most fully identify this strain of promise with that respecting the new covenant, and, therefore, lead us to the gospel age for its main fulfillment.——"Planting them in this land," has, of course, a remoter fulfillment in the gospel blessings of the latter day.

42. For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

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43. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, *It is* desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

44. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal *them*, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

These verses serve to connect Jeremiah's recent purchase in Anathoth with this strain of glorious promise. That fact became the occasion of these promises. It was done to be a historic memorial of God's faithfulness to the believing Jews of those times. They might bear the memory of it with them into their captivity, and be assured that the land from which they were then driven is still the Lord's land, where promise and prophecy are still to have a fulfillment, glorious to the love and faithfulness of their God.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

This chapter is closely connected with chapter 32, as to its date and occasion. In its general strain of promise it harmonizes with the two next before it, and also with chap. 23: 1–8.——The city was at this time besieged, and tottering to its fall. This prospective ruin of the city and temple chilled the hearts of those who would fain hold fast to the promises of the Lord, and hence became a sore temptation to despondency and even despair. To re-assure their sinking faith, these reiterated promises are given here in the very jaws of national ruin.

1. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

"The second time" refers to chap. 32: 2 as the first time, and, indeed, to matters revealed throughout that chapter.

2. Thus saith the LORD the maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; The LORD *is* his name;

In this verse we meet the question, What is the antecedent of "thereof" and "it?" The maker of what?——The verbs used here involve the idea of creatorship. Yet here the strain of the context requires us to give them, not their literal, but their figura-

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tive sense, referring to his acts, not of physical, but of spiritual creation—the resuscitation of the true Israel from the ruins of the outward Israel, now corrupt and effete. Hence the meaning of the verse is, "Thus saith the Lord, who will surely create Israel anew, who will faithfully perform those good words of his promise, and will do all that he has said." The "Lord *Jehovah*," the unchangeable, and therefore the faithful One, is especially *the* name whose significance will be made manifest yet again in the performance of his word.

3. Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

"Mighty things." This Hebrew word here rendered "mighty," does not legitimately mean either strong or great; but high and inaccessible, as of high walls that can not be surmounted. Hence it denotes here that which the mind can not readily reach and master—things hard to be understood, as the next clause implies, "which thou knowest not." Note here that asking is before receiving; the calling on God in prayer before the answer, and before the showing of great, and otherwise dark, unknown things. This is the precious, divine order, designed of God to draw his people very near to himself.

4. For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword;

5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but *it is* to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.

These verses call the mind to the fearful ruin of Jewish homes and families, in order to give a vivid view of the desolation which is about to fall on the entire city and people. But this vivid view is given only to set off in the stronger light the greatness of the mercy that will surely restore, rebuild, and bless.——In the last clause of v. 4, "the mounts" are the high embankments or mounds of earth already explained. The houses of the city are thrown down by means of these mounds, *i. e.*, by the missiles of destruction hurled from their summits. The "sword" is probably used in general for all weapons of war, and here for weapons thrown over the walls into the city.——The Jewish soldiers go to fight with the Chaldeans, but with no other result than to fill those houses with their dead, slain of the Lord himself in his anger against the nation for their sins. So distinctly are they to see God's hand in their defeat and ruin.

6. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will

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cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.

7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first.

8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

"Behold," see what divine love inspires and divine power will perform. This city, so terribly cursed by its sins, and desolated by the Chaldean armies, I will surely heal and restore. Those great sins I will freely forgive, and those polluted souls I will cleanse. Such is the beginning of this wonderful strain of promise for Zion.

9. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor, before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

This deliverance will be so great and so signal as to impress all the heathen nations. The Lord will get to himself honor and praise before them all. They will hear of the great blessings the Lord has brought upon his people, and will stand in fear and awe before him as One who, being infinite in power to save his people, must be alike infinite in power to overwhelm his foes.

10. Thus saith the LORD; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say *shall be* desolate without man and without beast, *even* in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,

11. The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD *is* good; for his mercy *endureth* forever: *and* of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

To the expressions common in this prophet to denote the peace and happiness of the people, are added here words of thanksgiving and praise to God. The people will not only be full of joy; they will also remember the great Giver of all their blessings with

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overflowing soul, adoring his goodness and mercy that endure forever. This indicates the richest spiritual blessings—the work of the Spirit of God upon their heart, and not merely the accumulation of worldly good.

12. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be a habitation of shepherds causing *their* flocks to lie down.

13. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth *them*, saith the LORD.

As a quiet pastoral life filled their highest ideal of peace, repose, and abundance—a fact due somewhat to the examples of the patriarchs and of David, so here this state of spiritual enjoyment and peace is clothed in these images.——The contrast is made strong; in this very place, doomed to be so desolate as to have in it neither man nor any of his domestic animals; here shall yet be the dwellings of shepherds with their flocks reposing most quietly.——The last clause of v. 13 refers to the usual mode of counting their flocks, viz., causing them to pass under the hand of one who should number them.

14. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

15. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness.

"Behold" calls special attention to the rich promises now to be made. The time will come for God to perform that good thing which he had promised, referring here specially to chap. 23: 5, 6, and to chap. 31: 31–40.——"The Branch of righteousness," made to grow up unto David, is the same here as in chap. 23: 5, 6. See the notes there. It grows up *unto David*, to fulfill the good promise which the Lord had made unto him (first in 2 Sam. 7: 12–16). This is the great Messiah, whose rule will be in so striking contrast with the unrighteous rule of the later Jewish kings. Under him all will be peace. Jerusalem, the glorious center of Messiah's kingdom, will then fitly bear the name, " Jehovah Tsidkenu," "the *Lord our Righteousness*," so that every mention of her name will suggest—

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It is the Lord alone who saves us.——It should be noted that Jerusalem has never in fact received this name as an appellative in common use, and probably never will. This prophecy does not affirm as to the letter but only the spirit of the name. So Jesus was never known by the common appellative, Immanuel. Yet the name would have been appropriate, and this is precisely what the prophecy (Isa. 7: 14) teaches.

17. For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;

18. Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

"David shall never want a man," etc., means that the succession of kings in the line of David shall never fail. His lineal successors will occupy the throne indefinitely long. See the original promise in David's address to Solomon shortly before his death (1 Kings 2: 4), and twice repeated by Solomon himself (1 Kings 8: 25, and 9: 5). Yet this promise must not be pressed to forbid a temporary interruption, for there was such an interruption during the captivity. The pith of the promise was, that the Lord would revive the princes of David's line after the captivity, but especially that he would bring forth that glorious scion from the stock of David, his greater son, the Messiah, and make him king forever on his throne over all the people of the Lord.——But this promise affirms also the perpetual succession of the Levitical priesthood: "Neither shall the priests the Levites ever want a man before me to offer burnt-offering," etc. Zechariah and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, are authorized expounders of this remarkable prophecy. Zechariah taught (chap. 3) that after the captivity the priesthood was to be restored in its purity and beauty, and that the high priest and his associates were men of typical significance, foreshadowing God's "servant, the *Branch*," who will "take away the iniquity of that land in one day"—thus "by one offering perfecting forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10: 14). Zechariah also taught in chap. 4, that through the priesthood the Lord would pour the oil of his grace upon his people; and in chapter 6, that the Branch (Messiah) should "build the temple of the Lord" and "be a priest upon his throne," *i. e.*, be both king and priest, thus uniting in himself the functions of David and of Aaron. The Epistle to the Hebrews elaborates the great idea that Jesus Christ, after he had once offered a sacrifice for sins as the great High Priest of his people, "forever sat down at the right hand of God"—"a great High Priest passed through the heavens," "ever living to make intercession for them." (Heb. 10: 12, and 4: 14, and 7: 25, etc.)——So complete are the appliances for the salvation of lost men. Well may the great apostle say, "And ye are complete in him" (Col. 2: 10). In him every want of their souls is met.

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19. And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying,

20. Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;

21. *Then* may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

22. As the host of heaven can not be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

Here as in chap. 31: 35–37, the richest promises are confirmed by the strongest assurances. The Lord's covenant of the day and of the night (see Gen. 1, and Ps. 136: 8, 9); the divine constitution of nature whereby the succession of day and night will continue while the world shall stand, is beautifully appropriated as the symbol and the pledge of this never-failing promise respecting the eternal kingship and priesthood of the Messiah. To the Messiah this must mainly and ultimately refer, and not to the merely human kings of David's line or to the priests of Aaron's. For plainly the promises had no adequate fulfillment in those lines apart from the Messiah. Its spiritual fullness forbids us to think of any thing less or other than the work of Christ.——Note also that the countless multitudes of the seed of David and of the Levites in the priesthood can be fulfilled only as we refer the word "David" to the Messiah and take his seed in the broad sense which includes all the people of the living God, Gentiles indeed as well as Jews—that "great multitude which no man can number," seen by the revelator (Apoc. 7: 9). These are all "both kings and priests unto God" (Apoc. 1: 6, and 1 Pet. 2: 5). Even Isaiah saw that all the people of God and not least the Gentiles would be priests (chap. 61: 6, and 66: 21).

23. Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

24. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them.

25. Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant *be* not with day and night, *and if* I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;

26. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, *so* that I will not take *any* of his seed *to be*

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rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

The same promise is here reiterated, especially to rebut the unbelieving cavils of some among the people.——The phrase, "the two families," is most naturally applied to the two rival kingdoms after the revolt, viz., Israel and Judah.——The unbelieving ones said, The Lord hath utterly rejected those nations. So saying, they despised *my* people, the Lord said, and thus insulted the Lord himself by assuming that his promises were worthless and his professed love for his people only a false pretense. The Lord meets this by the most solemn and earnest asseverations: "*If* I have made no covenant with the day and with the night; *if* that covenant shall fail and prove worthless, then may this covenant of mine fail; not otherwise!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

This chapter contains two distinct portions. This first part (vs. 1–7) predicts the capture of the city and of its king by the Chaldeans; specifies distinctly that king Zedekiah would personally be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and would see him face to face, yet would not die by the sword, and would have at his death the usual honors of the earlier Jewish kings. This passage closely resembles chap. 32: 3, 5, and, therefore, probably bears the same date, and is essentially the same message.——The second portion gives the history of a remarkable manumission of Hebrew servants and their subjection again to servitude. King Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people, and with the princes, to set free their Hebrew servants and handmaids. They did so; but subsequently forced them all back into bondage. The Lord denounced judgments upon them for this sin. ——Vs. 21, 22, taken in connection with other known facts in their history, give us a clue to the circumstances under which both this manumission and the subsequent reënslavement took place. The history (especially chapter 37) shows that after the Chaldeans had commenced the siege of Jerusalem, the Egyptians sent forward an army to aid their Jewish friends, and to act against the Chaldeans; that the latter, hearing of their approach, raised the siege and marched against the Egyptian army; but subsequently, after driving them back, returned to the siege and captured the city. In God's threatening of judgment on Jerusalem for reënslaving her manumitted servants, he says (chap. 34: 21, 22): "I will give Zedekiah and his princes into the hand of the king of Babylon's army *which are gone up from you*." Also, "Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city, and

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they shall fight against it and take it." Hence this threatened judgment, recorded in the latter portion of the chapter, was revealed to the prophet before the Chaldeans resumed the siege. And, moreover, there can be no doubt that this general manumission was made after the siege of the city had commenced, or, at least, after it had become morally certain; and that the measure was *prudential*, its objects being probably twofold, viz., to propitiate the favor of God, and to gain the good-will and the more effective service of the freedmen in defense of the city. Then, upon the withdrawal of the Chaldean forces, the fears of the people subsided, their old slaveholding passion revived, and consequently they reënslaved their freedmen and brought on themselves the curse of the Almighty, who loves to show himself the God and Father of the oppressed.

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying,

2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire:

3. And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.

The Chaldeans had already besieged Jerusalem when the Lord sent his prophet to Zedekiah to announce his personal doom and that of the city.——The vast extent of the Chaldean empire under Nebuchadnezzar is indicated in the language, "All the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion." This corresponds to the representation in Daniel. (See 3: 2–4, and 4: 1.)

4. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword;

5. *But* thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn *odors* for thee; and they will lament thee, *saying*, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.

This was not a burning of the dead body itself (a practice common among some other nations), but of aromatic spices burnt at

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the burial in honor of the dead. The earliest notice of this custom is in the case of king Asa (2 Chron. 16: 14): "They buried him in his own sepulcher, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices, prepared by the apothecaries' art, and they made a very great burning for him." The omission of this practice in the case of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21: 19), is specially noticed as a deviation from an established custom. ——Comparing what is said here of Zedekiah's death with what is said of Jehoiakim (chap. 22: 18, 19), the former is decidedly the more honored and the less despicable. Jehoiakim stands on the page of history supremely wicked, mean, and despised. Zedekiah had some to mourn his death.

6. Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem,

7. When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah; for these defensed cities remained of the cities of Judah.

Lachish and Azekah were strong cities, and, like Jerusalem, required to be reduced by siege. The exact site of these ancient cities is not certainly known. They were, however, in the southwest part of Judah. Lachish withstood Sennacherib in the times of Hezekiah. The history (2 Chron. 32: 9) states that "he laid siege against it with all his power," and even remained himself to direct the operations there, while he sent his subordinate officers to Jerusalem. This celebrated siege is supposed by Layard to be depicted on certain slabs disinterred from the ruins of Nineveh.

8. *This is* the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which *were* at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;

9. That every man should let his man-servant, and every man his maid-servant, *being* a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, *to wit*, of a Jew his brother.

10. Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his man-servant, and every one his maid-servant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more; then they obeyed, and let *them* go.

11. But afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids.

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This historical statement of the manumission of their Hebrew servants, implies that it was done at the instance of Zedekiah, and with the forms of a solemn and public covenant. The princes and people seem at first to have consented readily, probably under the influences already referred to, viz., fear of the displeasure of God, and fear of the Chaldean army; in the hope that God would favor them against the Chaldeans, and that their servants manumitted would make better soldiers.——The temporary withdrawal of the Chaldean forces put their motives to the test, and showed but too plainly that they heeded not the claims of humanity, justice, or the law of God.

12. Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, *saying*,

13. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying,

14. At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother a Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.

This covenant stands recorded in full, Exod. 21: 2–11, and Deut. 15: 12–18. In Exodus it stands at the head of the civil statutes as being a matter of most vital consequence. It was indeed a most beneficent regulation, and manifestly aimed not to create a system of servitude where none existed before, but to regulate, restrict, and ameliorate a system already strongly established among the people. Hebrews of either sex, compelled by the necessities of subsistence to attach themselves to the household of some one who had wealth enough to give them employment and bread, were to have the opportunity after six years' service of becoming free. The tone of Lev. 25, shows that such cases were often the result of debt and misfortune from which a man could not extricate himself so as to gain subsistence in any other way. He must anticipate his earnings by selling his labor in advance. ——The details of this system need not be given here. Suffice it to say, these Hebrew statutes originated in God's tender regard for the interests and rights of the poor. Hence he guarded and enforced them with a vigilance and beneficence worthy of an infinite Father.——These statutes had fallen into neglect. For many years past the people had not hearkened to the voice of God in this matter. How long they had been disregarded does not appear from the history; probably during the administration of all their apostate kings.

15. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my

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sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name:

16. But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids.

In this recital of the case by the Lord himself he shows that they had done right in releasing their servants according to the law; that they had made that covenant in his own temple and under the most solemn religious sanctions; and that in turning back to violate this covenant they had polluted the very name of Jehovah their God. The original word used here implies that they had recklessly abused and contemned that sacred name.

17. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbor: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

The reader will notice how the terms of the threatening correspond to the terms which express the sin. As the people would not proclaim liberty to their oppressed brethren, God would proclaim liberty to the sword, the pestilence, and the famine to do their work of destruction upon the guilty oppressors. This form of statement serves to bind together the punishment and the sin, so that the form of announcing the punishment should perpetually remind them of the sin for which it was sent. Hence, when the people saw and felt the sword, the pestilence, and the famine, coming down upon themselves with the fullest liberty and with no restraint, they would remember that they had given no liberty to the poor servants whom the Lord bade them set free. When the oppressed poor had none among the kings and great men of the earth to plead their cause and avenge their wrongs, the Lord Almighty came down and *the thing was done!* done to purpose; done with terrible vengeance!

18. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,

19. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

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20. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

The manner of ratifying this covenant is indicated very plainly. The contracting parties were God on the one hand and the Hebrew masters on the other. The transaction took place in their sacred temple. A calf was cut in twain and the masters passed between the severed portions, virtually imprecating on themselves a like cutting asunder if they should prove false to their vow. A similar notice of this very ancient method of ratifying a solemn covenant appears Gen. 15: 9–18. There the Lord represented himself by "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp which passed between the pieces."

21. And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

22. Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

The allusions here to the return of the Chaldeans have been already noticed. They are valuable as giving a clue to the circumstances under which those selfish and wicked oppressors were induced to manumit their servants. They also suggest the temptations which induced or rather seduced them to subject their former servants again to the yoke.——The case shows clearly how God looks on human bondage. The system of periodical emancipation which he established in the statutes given through Moses, constitutes one and only one of several regulations designed to ameliorate the condition of persons held to service. This relief the Lord guarded with jealous care, and punished its violation with fearful judgments. Let their severity be taken as an index of his eternal abhorrence of oppression and of the tender care with which he watches over the welfare of the oppressed. Verily the Lord will let no nation or people prosper long who trample down his own defenseless poor! The slaveholders of ancient Jerusalem stand in history as swift witnesses of Jehovah's wrath against the selfishness and love of power which crush down the powerless servant in defiance of his Almighty Helper and Friend.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

After a succession of chapters bearing date in the reign of Zedekiah, viz., 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34; this falls back to the reign of Jehoiakim. It treats of the Rechabites, and bases its stern rebuke of Judah and Jerusalem on the noble example of that community.

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,
2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.
3. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites;
4. And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which *was* by the chamber of the princes, which *was* above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door:
5. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

This extraordinary community of Rechabites had been induced to take up their residence in Jerusalem through fear of the army of the Chaldeans which overran Judea in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Of their earlier location and history a few scattered notices are found in the Scriptures. Jehonadab the son of Rechab, appears in the history of Jehu (2 Kings 10: 15–23) as a warm friend of this zealous reformer, and his active supporter in the destruction of the prophets and worshipers of Baal. It may be inferred that he was intimate with the heroic few who had still adhered to the worship of the true God, despite of the almost universal prevalence of idol-worship. He went with Jehu into the house of Baal to search out and remove all the servants of the Lord so as to leave behind only the worshipers of Baal.——The house of Rechab appears yet farther back (1 Chron. 2: 55) as connected with the family of the Kenites. These Kenites are recognized from Judges 1: 16, and 4: 11–17, and 1 Sam. 15: 6, as the descendants of the father-in-law of Moses. This family accompanied the children of Israel through the wilderness into Canaan. There a portion of them appear in the history of Deborah and Barak, far out on the northern confines of the land (Judges

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4: 11–17). Another family had their residence in southern Judah as appears in 1 Sam. 15: 6. Every-where they adhered to their nomadic habits of life, dwelling in tents.——For the greater publicity Jeremiah brought them into the chambers of the temple where their refusal to drink wine would be a thing of public observation. Hanan, said to be "a man of God," was doubtless a prophet—this being the usual designation of prophets. (See 1 Sam. 2: 27, and 1 Kings 12: 22.)

6. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, *neither* ye, nor your sons forever:

7. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have *any:* but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers.

8. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;

9. Nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:

10. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

They nobly refused to taste wine, and refer to the ancient prohibition which became their standing temperance pledge—already observed then at least ever since the days of Jehu.——Between the accession of Jehu and the accession of Jehoiakim were two hundred and seventy-three years. They also maintained with unswerving tenacity their ancient Bedouin, nomadic modes of life, abjuring houses, tillage, and vineyards; dwelling in tents only, and having doubtless the care of cattle. The reason assigned, "That ye may live many days in the land where ye are strangers," indicates the conviction of their venerable father that these Bedouin habits were conducive to longevity. They were still "strangers" in the land of Palestine, their proper home being the desert.

11. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

The approach of Nebuchadnezzar with an army of Chaldeans and Syrians in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, induced them to take refuge within the walls of Jerusalem.

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12. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

13. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.

14. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

15. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

The strong point which the Lord makes upon this noble example is, that this tribe had adhered with unswerving constancy through so many years to the precepts of their father Jonadab the son of Rechab, while the Jews had utterly refused to adhere to his precepts; would not listen to his repeated messages and warnings, but spurned them madly away. *They* heard and obeyed a mortal man; *this people* will not hear and obey the eternal God!

16. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:

17. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

And now the Lord renews his threatenings. Because the sons of Jonadab performed the commandments of their father, but my children have set at naught my commands, I will surely bring on them all the evil I have already pronounced against them.

18. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab

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your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you:

19. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever.

But upon the Rechabites the Lord pronounces his blessing. Their race shall continue long in favor with God. To "stand before God" is the usual phrase for ministering acceptably in his presence. The tribe of Levi was chosen "to stand before God" (Deut. 10: 8, and 18: 5–7).——There is evidence that the Rechabites were adopted into the families of Israel, and recognized as belonging to the tribe of Levi. There is also a series of historical notices which remarkably confirm the promise made here: "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever." Thus the Targum of Jonathan—a Chaldee paraphrase on Jeremiah written near the Christian era—translates our text, "Shall not want a man ministering before me," *i. e.*, performing the service of priest and Levite. Such must have been the understanding of this phrase in his day. His translation makes it highly probable that they were known to be incorporated with the Levites, and acting with them at that time.——The Septuagint version puts at the head of Ps. 71 this remarkable superscription: "Of one David of the sons of Jonadab and of the first captives." This goes to show that when this translation was made (about B. C. 280), the sons of Jonadab were among the returned captives, and had a place with the Levite singers and psalmists. Augustine notices this superscription, and refers it to the Rechabites of Jeremiah 35.——Malchiah, the son of Rechab, is noticed among the returning captives (Neh. 3: 14) as one of the leading builders of the city wall.——Yet again, Hegesippus, a converted Jew who lived at Corinth and at Rome, and who (about A. D. 160) wrote a series of memoirs of good men from the crucifixion of Christ to his own time, in giving an account of the martyrdom of James, states that while the scribes and Pharisees were stoning him, "one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, of the Rechabites who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out protesting against the crime." This must be accepted as proof (*a*) That the Rechabites were incorporated among the priests and Levites; and (*b*) That up to that day Jonadab the son of Rechab did not lack a man "to stand before God."——Some later notices bring down this testimony remarkably to the present time. Benjamin of Tudela (of the twelfth century) mentions that near El Jubar he found Jews who were named Rechabites. They abstained from wine and flesh; gave tithes to teachers who devoted themselves to studying the law and weeping for Jerusalem. They numbered one hundred thousand, and were governed by a prince who traced his genealogy to the house of David.——Dr. Wolff, of our own century, in his printed journal for 1829, says the Jews of Jerusa-

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lem and Yemen told him he would find the Rechabites of Jer. 35 living near Mecca. He found them near Senaa. One of them, Mousa by name, in answer to the question, Whose descendants are you? read from an Arabic Bible Jer. 35: 5–11, and said, "You will find us sixty thousand in number." You see the words of the prophet have been fulfilled: "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever."——Even as late as October, 1862, an Eastern traveler, Signor Pierotti, read a paper at the Cambridge meeting of the British Association, stating that he met a tribe calling themselves by this name near the Dead Sea. They had a Hebrew Bible, and told him the same story that had been told Dr. Wolff thirty years before.——Even these historical proofs, for which I am mainly indebted to Smith's Bible Dictionary, are not exhaustive. But they suffice to show that the Rechabites are one of the Lord's standing witnesses preserved by him age after age to testify to the reality of certain great Scripture facts over which the waves of time have rolled for several thousand years. The distinct preservation of the Rechabites belongs to the same class of facts with the preservation of the Jews and of the ancient Samaritans, all of whom are among the Lord's special witnesses to the historic and prophetic credibility of the Old Testament.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

This chapter belongs to the fourth and fifth years of Jehoiakim (vs. 1, 9). The Lord directs Jeremiah to write all his prophecies into one roll or volume. The prophet employs Baruch as his amanuensis; then sends him to read these prophecies before all the people who might convene in the temple on a day of public fasting. Michaiah heard this public reading and reported what he heard to the princes. They sent for Baruch to bring the volume and read to them. He did so. They thought the king ought to hear this book, and notified him accordingly. The king sent Jehudi for the book. He brought it and read a few leaves; whereupon the king took the book from him, cut it up with his penknife and burnt it all in the fire. The Lord directs Jeremiah to write out all those prophecies again, which he did, "adding also many like words;" and also announced from the Lord the fearful doom of this impious king.

1. And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, *that* this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2. Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I

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spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

3. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

"A roll of a book." The ancient Hebrew books were written usually on parchment (*i. e.*, prepared skins) cut of uniform breadth and attached end to end so as to roll up around a cylinder of wood, either from one end or from both ends. Hence, the ancient word "volume," (volumen) a thing *rolled up*. The word "leaves" (v. 23) is an accommodation to modern usage to indicate merely the successive sections or columns of words. The original means the *doors*, from the resemblance of these columns to a door.——This direction embraced obviously all the words that Jeremiah had spoken from the Lord concerning not only Jerusalem and Judah, but all the nations from the very commencement of his prophetic work in the thirteenth year of Josiah. It can not be certainly inferred that none of them had been written before, perhaps in separate rolls. This direction may have laid emphasis on putting them all into one roll. It seems to have been hoped that by thus bringing them all before the minds of the people at once, they might be induced to hear and to repent of their sins so that the Lord could forgive and save.

4. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.

This Baruch (whose name means *blessed*) has appeared in the history (32: 12, 13) as the special friend of Jeremiah. He was the grandson of Maaseiah who was governor of the city under king Josiah (2 Chron. 34: 8). He continued to follow the fortunes of Jeremiah as a devoted friend and associate until their mutual history closes and they both disappear from the sacred record. Here he serves him as an amanuensis.

5. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I *am* shut up; I can not go into the house of the LORD:

6. Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD'S house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.

7. It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way:

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for great *is* the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people.

8. And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD'S house.

It does not appear in what precise sense nor to what extent Jeremiah was now restrained of his personal liberty. It does not seem to have been close confinement in prison, since the princes (v. 19) advised both Jeremiah and Baruch to go and hide themselves, manifestly in order to forestall a possible arrest by the king. When the king did in fact order their arrest (v. 26), the Lord had hidden them. It is perhaps supposable that he meant only that it was not prudent for him to go. He was restrained by prudential reasons. The original word bears this general meaning, *restrained.*——The same reason for reading the book before the people appears here as above (v. 3) for writing it. It may be that they will hear, consider, turn to prayer and penitence, and so find mercy.

9. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, *that* they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.

10. Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house, in the ears of all the people.

The special occasion of this fast is not stated. It was not the annual Jewish fast, for this was on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 23: 27, and 16: 29–31). It was therefore an extraordinary fast, and was probably called by the princes at the instance of the people, for the king does not appear in it at all. The occasion which prompted it was the danger from the Chaldeans who had utterly broken the Egyptian power a few months before at the great battle of Carchemish on the upper Euphrates (46: 2). Hence naturally, as the Jews had been in substantial alliance with the Egyptians, they had reason to fear the Chaldeans. Be this as it may, it was an admirable opportunity for this public reading of the book of Jeremiah before the assembled people.

11. When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD,

12. Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and lo, all the princes sat there, *even*

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Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

13. Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

The object of Michaiah seems to have been good. He thought the princes ought to be acquainted with the contents of this volume. He was at this time a young man, his grandfather, Shaphan, having been a very active scribe in the great reformation under Josiah. (See 2 Chron. 34: 8, 15–20.) Naturally and very properly he went up with the people to the temple on this day of fasting, and there heard this reading.

14. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thy hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

15. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read *it* in their ears.

16. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

17. And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?

18. Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book.

19. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

When the princes came to hear the book they were deeply moved. The original implies that they looked at one another with fear and consternation. This is the sense of the words, "They were afraid both one and other." Of course they thought the king surely ought to hear it. It affected him vitally both in his personal and in his regal relations. Both as an individual man, and as a king on the throne of David, he ought to hear every word of it. Their object therefore in calling the king's attention to this wonderful book was good.——It is remarkable that they were inquisitive to know how the book came into existence, and what part Baruch had in its production.——They knew the king so well that they anticipated dan-

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ger to both Jeremiah and Baruch when he should hear the book read; hence their precautionary advice of concealment.

20. And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

21. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

It is plain they did not think the book altogether safe in the king's hands, so they laid it away carefully in the scribe's chamber. Their plan was first to report its contents to the king and then await further developments.——The king was not content with merely hearing the book reported, but ordered it brought and read before him. The princes were present.

22. Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month: and *there was a fire* on the hearth burning before him.

23. And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth.

24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

25. Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them.

26. But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

The ninth month would include part of our December. This fire, as the original word indicates, was burning in a small pot or portable furnace.——The "penknife" of those times must be thought of as large enough to sharpen the wooden style used for writing on parchment.——The reader will notice the mingled fear and horror of the author tacitly implied in his surprise that neither the king nor his servants were afraid, nor expressed any indignation at this horrid impiety of the king. He had openly insulted and contemned the Infinite God! Why did not all the princes stand aghast as if afraid of some sudden outburst of Jehovah's wrath! The king's guilt was the more flagrant because at least

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three of his princes had besought him not to burn this roll. In every aspect of this king's character we see only consummate hardihood and sin—consummate meanness and guilt.——In his indignation against Jeremiah and Baruch, he orders them to be arrested. The Lord had caused them to be secreted from his search. Probably he would then have taken their lives if he could.

27. Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying,

28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah hath burned.

29. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

30. Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

31. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

32. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

This disgraceful and fearful doom of Jehoiakim the prophet is commanded to go to him and proclaim, fearless of danger. We must suppose that the heroic prophet went. What a contrast between this mean, morally hardened, and impious king, boiling with wrath against the prophet and against God, and this heroic prophet, bearing the message of God to the royal tyrant, facing death firmly and never shrinking from any duty which his divine Master enjoined! These two men seem scarcely to belong to the same human race. God's grace had made and molded the one; Baal and the devil seem to have had the making and the shaping of the other.——The entire book was rewritten, and the record adds, "There were added besides unto them many other like words." This second manuscript, so far as can be known now, is

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the same which we have in our hands. As already remarked in the introduction, and in notes on the earlier chapters of the book, the arrangement of the several prophecies with so very little apparent method and chronological order, is accounted for by the circumstances narrated in this chapter. It was to both Baruch and Jeremiah a season of extreme peril. Now they are flying to escape arrest, and perhaps immediate death; anon they are imprisoned. Next the prophet is tortured, and at length hurried from his country to take his lot with the poor exiles who fled into Egypt. Such external surroundings are by no means favorable either to the making of books, or to the compiling of a large number of distinct prophetic messages in either logical or chronological order. So far as is known to us, no other book of prophecies in the Bible was compiled under circumstances so unfavorable to method and order. Certainly no other one exhibits such a lack of these qualities. The book and the condition of the men who made it, are remarkably correlated to each other, a fact which goes strongly to confirm its genuineness. It is what ought to be expected from the circumstances under which it was compiled.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The date of this chapter falls during the reign of Zedekiah, and indeed within the last eighteen months of his reign, *i. e.*, within the period of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It refers specially to the historic fact that during the progress of this siege the king of Egypt approached with an army for the relief of his own allies. Whereupon the Chaldeans raised the siege and marched against the Egyptians. In the result the Egyptians returned to their own country. The Chaldeans reinvested Jerusalem and ultimately took it. Precisely at what stage of the siege this diversion by the Egyptians occurred or how long the siege was suspended in consequence, we are not told.——While they were absent Jeremiah took the opportunity to leave the city, was arrested at the city gate, and thrown into close confinement.

1. And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.
2. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.

The king whom Nebuchadnezzar placed on the throne was Zedekiah (2 Kings 24: 17). It was not Jehoiakim, for he was put on the throne by the king of Egypt (2 Kings 23: 34). It was not

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Jehoiachin (Coniah) for he succeeded as the legitimate heir, the eldest son. The statements in v. 2 seem designed to suggest the unfriendly relations of these parties toward the Lord's prophet. Being in rebellion against God and having disregarded the repeated messages sent them from the Lord through Jeremiah, they felt by no means kindly toward him. Yet the king regarded and feared him as a true prophet of God. Wicked men often respect and even revere the good men whom they are wicked enough to hate.

3. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.

4. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

5. Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

The king sends messengers to ask the prophet to pray for himself, for the people, and for the country. Perhaps the special point of the request was that he would pray that the Chaldeans might not return to resume the siege.——At this time the prophet was not in close confinement. He was confined closely soon after as the sequel shows.——This Pharaoh was almost without doubt Pharaoh-hophra or Apries who came to the throne about B. C. 690, and reigned nineteen years. He is referred to in the Scriptures (Jer. 44: 30, and 46: 25, and Ezek. 29: 3, and 30: 21, 22).

6. Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

7. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

8. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

9. Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart.

10. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

As drowning men catch at straws so the imperiled Jews and their king were ready to grasp the faintest shadow of hope from this approach of an Egyptian army. But the Lord was against

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them. Hence no earthly power could save them from destruction. It was of the Lord's mercy that he promptly and solemnly warned them against deceiving themselves with this vain hope. Such hope lessened the pressure of motive on their minds to repent before God and seek his favor. Hence the promptness and decision of this assurance that help from that quarter was vain.——The reader will remember that the events of chap. 34—the setting free of their oppressed servants and their reënslavement—interlace with the events of these verses and serve to show how supremely selfish and wicked the leading men of the nation were, and how terribly the Lord both denounced and scourged them for their great sins.

11. And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

12. Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

The original words do not necessarily imply that the Chaldeans were afraid of the approaching Egyptians, but only that *on account of* their approach they raised the siege and marched forth against them. They broke up the siege of Jerusalem *from before* the Egyptian army. This is all that the original indicates. They chose to meet their foe elsewhere.——On the last clause of v. 12 critics disagree. The verb rendered "to separate himself," has, in its primary form [Kal conjugation], the meaning, to be smooth, and to divide by lot as an inheritance; perhaps by the use of smooth stones. In the causative form which appears here, it has but two well-established meanings, viz., (1.) To obtain an inheritance. (2.) To slip away easily and unobserved. Hence some have taken the first meaning, viz., that Jeremiah set off to go into the land of Benjamin to enter upon the possession of his inheritance, supposed to have been the one he bought in Anathoth of his cousin Hanameel; while others give it the other sense; he went forth from Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to slip away from thence unobserved among the people, *i. e.*, those who were then leaving the city in considerable numbers. I think the latter construction most in harmony with the other words of the sentence, to slip away "*from thence in the midst* of the people," yet the former is not bad.——Of the moral character of this effort we have scarcely sufficient data to decide. If he went despite of clear intimations of the Lord's will, he did wrong, and his arrest and imprisonment were a righteous retribution for his sin. But if he had no such intimations, and acted simply from prudential considerations, no reason appears why he should be blamed. Perhaps he omitted to ask counsel of the Lord in the matter—an omission of which Christian men should never be guilty.

13. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a cap-

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tain of the ward *was* there, whose name *was* Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.

14. Then said Jeremiah, *It is* false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes.

The phrase, "Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans," is translated literally. It charges him with desertion to that enemy—a charge very probably suggested by his oft-repeated advice to the king and people to submit to the Chaldeans as their wisest, truest policy. Jeremiah denied the charge, but was nevertheless arrested.

15. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

16. When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days;

It was common in that age and country to have prisons attached to the houses of officers, or to the palace of the king. This was a pit excavated in the ground. So the word rendered cabins implies—a vault arched overhead.

17. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there *any* word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

After many days' confinement in this horrible dungeon under ground, the king took him out and asked him secretly if there was any word from the Lord. The prophet's circumstances were at this time such as would most thoroughly test his loyalty to his divine Lord. He had every earthly inducement to please the king; yet he seems not to have listened to those inducements for a moment, but fearlessly announced the king's terrible doom from the Lord, "Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon."——Prison discipline had not unnerved his steadfast purpose to be true to his God. He had an earnest personal plea to make for his liberty and his life. He wisely put this plea on its own bottom—an humble appeal to the king's sense of justice and feelings of compassion. He could not swerve from his fidelity to God for the sake of even liberty or life.

18. Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

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19. Where *are* now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

What is my offense? I have only told you the truth, one proof of which you may yourself see; for where are those false prophets that gainsayed my words and belied the Lord, saying, "The king of Babylon shall not come up against this city and land?" Let the king look at the facts, and he will see that so far all my predictions have proved true. Why, then, should he count me his enemy for telling him the truth?

20. Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.

21. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

To go back into that foul dungeon and be subjected there (we must suppose) to the most scanty and unwholesome diet would be at the peril of his life. The king listened and yielded, changing his place of confinement, and providing for him more comfortable food. Zedekiah was far less hardened and malign in his depravity than Jehoiakim. He had not passed utterly beyond the point of a wholesome fear of God, and was not deaf to the dictates of humanity.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

This chapter is closely connected with the preceding. Several of the princes demand that Jeremiah shall die as a traitor to his country. The king weakly surrenders him to their power, and they thrust him into a pit having mire at the bottom. Through the kindness of Ebed-melech he is taken up and his life saved. He has a private interview with the king, and again presses him to surrender to the Chaldeans.

1. Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying,

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2. Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.

3. Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.

"All the people" to whom Jeremiah is said to have spoken these words must mean all those and those only who came to him while restricted to the court of the prison (chap. 37: 21). Perhaps the people were not restrained from coming to him if they chose. Considerable numbers may have come. To them he continued to repeat the counsel he had received from the Lord to give up themselves to the Chaldean king.——These princes paid no deference to the word of the Lord, and regarded the prophet's counsel as treason against the throne and the state.

4. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

This charge of high treason kept out of view the counsel of the Lord, and gave no credit to Jeremiah's claim of being sent of God to say these very words. It was not strange that, from their wicked stand-point they should take the view they did. The strangeness and the guilt all lie in their disregard of the manifest proofs that Jeremiah spake from the Lord. The worst fact in their case was, that they had no heart to hear what God had said. In this lay their damning sin. Most righteously this became their ruin.

5. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he *is* in your hand; for the king *is* not *he that* can do *any* thing against you.

The king's position before these princes is precisely that of imbecility. The shape of his language seems intended to intimate, that according to the constitution of the Jewish state, he as king had no power to oppose the will of his princes. But this is a mere apology for his timidity and weakness. If Zedekiah had possessed the firmness of the wicked, dogged Jehoiakim when he cut up and burnt the roll in defiance of the solemn convictions and expostulations of his princes (36: 16, 23–25), he would have boldly defended Jeremiah as a prophet of the living God. The amount of what he was understood to say was simply, "He is in your hand;" "The present king will not resist your will." Such weakness is not only

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contemptible; it is wicked. Men are bound to be bold enough to do right at any risk of personal peril.

6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that *was* in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire; so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

This dungeon was a deep pit, perhaps dug for water. At this time the water had disappeared and left mire on the bottom into which the prophet sunk. Let us hope and believe that the presence of his God and the testimony of a good conscience made the darkness of that dungeon radiant with light, and the cruel discomfort of it at least tolerable during those tardy hours. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

7. Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

8. Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for *there is* no more bread in the city.

Among all the royal household, and throughout the king's court, no one is found to exhibit the spirit of the good Samaritan save this Ethiopian eunuch. The Lord reward him and his race for such sympathy! There is sometimes a noble depth of humanity in the bosoms of men whose skins are not colored like our own. ——The subsequent notice of him (39: 15–18) shows that he put his trust in the Lord, a man of true piety, whom the Lord graciously preserved amid the general slaughter of the king's household.——To all the other discomforts and miseries of the prophet's situation was added hunger. On this plea specially the eunuch urges the king to order his release, for at this time no bread remained in the city. (Compare 37: 21.)

10. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die.

11. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took

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thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

12. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now *these* old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

The king, a man of some good impulses, seems to have ordered his release promptly.——In v. 12, the word rendered "armholes" seems to mean joints of the fingers, indicating that the prophet was drawn up by grasping the cords with his hands.

14. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that *is* in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me.

15. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare *it* unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

16. So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, *As* the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.

The place of this interview was manifestly private. Jeremiah made two conditions; that the king would *not* take his life; and *would* take his counsel. The king assented to the former; ignored the latter.——The phrase, "As the Lord liveth, that made us this soul," seems to mean, Who endowed us with this intelligent, conscious existence; made us living souls.

17. Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thy house:

18. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

This message the prophet had repeatedly given to the king and to his people. The Lord had fully purposed that the nation, unless saved by repentance, must fall before the Chaldean power. Their national pride repelled this advice; their infatuation plunged them deep in destruction.

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19. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.

20. But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver *thee.* Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee; so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.

Some of Zedekiah's people had already gone over to the Chaldeans against the will of their king, but according to the counsel of the Lord. The king anticipates and fears their taunts if he were to humble himself so low as to follow them. They might say, "And you too have come at last!" He is afraid the Chaldeans will deliver him into the hands of those Jews whom he would fain have punished for treason, and from whom he might therefore not unnaturally fear rough treatment. But it is always safe to obey God—a lesson which this king, alas! was slow to learn. ——In v. 20, instead of the received translation, "Obey the voice of the Lord *which* I speak unto thee," it would better give the sense of the original to read, "Obey the voice of the Lord *in regard* to what I am saying to thee."

21. But if thou refuse to go forth, this *is* the word that the LORD hath showed me:

22. And behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house *shall be* brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those *women* shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, *and* they are turned away back.

23. So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

The king who would not surrender to the Chaldeans through fear of being taunted by those who had gone over before him, would in fact be severely reproached by those whom of all he was most bound to protect, the women of his own household. They would be borne away by superior power into the hands of the princes of the king of Babylon (the king himself being not there at this time but at Riblah), and they would cast it into his teeth that his professed friends, the false prophets, had incited and seduced him and had prevailed against his better convictions and over his weak mind to prevent him from an honorable surrender to the inevitable Chaldean sway. "Now his feet are sunk in the mire," *i. e.*, of difficulties from which he can not extricate himself. "And are turned back," as in the case of men who can go forward in their schemes no further. Thus would his wives and daughters

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and all the women of his court reproach him, their natural protector.——From every quarter the stigma of a weak judgment and weak purposes attaches to this last king of this apostate dynasty.

24. Then saith Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.

25. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee:

26. Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

27. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived.

It was due to his timid fear of his princes (a fear unworthy of a king) that he devised this scheme for suppressing a part of the truth as to what had passed between himself and Jeremiah. A somewhat nice question of morals arises in cases of this sort on the point whether we are bound to tell the *whole truth* to men who demand it for a bad purpose; and if not, how far it is morally right to give or to favor the impression that we have told the whole truth when we have not. The latter is really the delicate point, for we readily assent to the doctrine that we are not bound, even though questioned, to tell all we know to all men under all circumstances.

28. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was *there* when Jerusalem was taken.

"This court of the prison" was probably a less severe and close confinement than either "his dungeon and cabin" in the house of Jonathan (37: 15, 16, 20) or the pit of mire, known as "the dungeon of Malchiah" (38: 6–13.) The original words might well be rendered, "The court of the guard-house." In this state his friends seem to have had access to him, and he announced to them the words of the Lord. (Compare chap. 37: 21 with chap. 38: 1–3.)

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

This chapter records the final capture of the city. The same event is narrated with more or less fullness in chap. 52 and in 2 Kings 25, and 2 Chron. 36.

1. In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

2. *And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up.

This siege continued eighteen months, closing according to the common chronology B. C. 588. Some of the more recent chronologists say B. C. 586.——That "the city was broken up," indicates that the walls were broken through so that the Chaldean army entered.

3. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, *even* Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

The middle gate is plausibly supposed to be a gate opening from the upper city to the lower. The Chaldeans are thought therefore to have first taken the northern city. The next verse shows that the king escaped through a gate on the south side.——Nergal-sharezer, now one of the chief princes, is probably the same who succeeded Evil-merodach on the throne of Babylon. The word "Rab-mag" may be in apposition with Nergal-sharezer, meaning *chief of the Magi*. This may have been his rank at this time.

4. And it came to pass, *that* when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

5. But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him.

King Zedekiah fled in the direction of Jericho, and was overtaken there. Hamath lay on the north of Palestine, in the usual route of caravans and armies from Babylon to Judea. There, at Riblah, Nebuchadnezzar had his head-quarters.

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6. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

7. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.

This king Zedekiah, both weak and wicked, met a fearful doom —his sons slain before his eyes, himself brought to look face to face into the eyes of the Chaldean king against whom he had faithlessly rebelled. Then his eyes were put out, and himself taken in chains to Babylon to die there. With singular minuteness all the apparently conflicting prophecies concerning him were precisely fulfilled. Ezekiel (chap. 12: 13) had said of him, "I will bring him to Babylon, yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there." Precisely so. He was borne there, yet never to see that great city nor the light of day there.——These nobles of Judah, whom we have seen exerting a sway so absolute and so pernicious over this weak king, are all slain.

8. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

9. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained.

10. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

V. 9 states very definitely that the captives taken to Babylon were in charge, not of Nebuchadnezzar personally, but of his officers, and naturally of "the captain of his body-guard." This is stated also by Berosus, the great historian of Chaldea. As quoted by Josephus, Berosus states that Nebuchadnezzar, having been crowned prince, was sent by his father Nabopolassar to quell an extensive insurrection in Cœlo-Syria, Phenicia, and Judea; that having done this victoriously, and having heard of the death of his father, "when he had settled the affairs of Egypt and of the adjacent regions, and *had arranged with certain of his friends to bring to Babylon the captives of the Jews*, came himself with great haste and with a small company through the wilderness to Babylon." (Rawlinson's Historical Evidences, p. 338.)——A few of the utterly poor were suffered to remain, perhaps as having too little energy to pay for transportation as captives.

11. Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying,

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12. Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.

13. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezar, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes;

14. Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home; so he dwelt among the people.

Remarkably the king of Babylon treats the prophet with the utmost consideration and kindness. Was this due to his knowing the tone of the prophet's advice to the people from the Lord, or to the general conviction that he was a true prophet of God; or to the prophet's reputation as a noble martyr to his conscience and his duty; or, finally, to some direct impression upon his mind from the Lord? Perhaps several of these influences were combined. ——The man to whom they intrusted him was manifestly one of his early and long-tried friends—a grandson of that Shaphan the scribe who was actively prominent in the reformation under Josiah. (See 2 Kings 22: 8–14.)

15. Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

16. Go and speak to Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be *accomplished* in that day before thee.

17. But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou *art* afraid.

18. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee; because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

Very appropriately the Lord remembers that good and true man, Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, to whom, under God, Jeremiah owed his life (chap. 38: 7–13). His record stands here as that of a godly man who trusted in the Lord. Of course the Lord did not forsake him in his hour of need. He never does.——So retribution from the Lord visits the guilty for their punishment, and the good for their deliverance; "For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2: 3); and "The Lord is a God of judgment," and "Blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa. 30: 18).

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CHAPTER XL.

This chapter continues the history of Jeremiah; treats also of Gedaliah the new governor; and of Ishmael the assassin.

1. The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon.

This caption "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord," etc., seems to contemplate the next four chapters (40–43), embracing in chap. 42 and 43 several special messages from the Lord, together with the history of those events which gave occasion for these messages.——Jeremiah and several other captives from Jerusalem appear to have been taken in chains as far as to Ramah. The name *Ramah*, meaning a city of high elevation, was given to several different cities in Palestine. This one is supposed to have been about six miles north from Jerusalem, on the road to Bethel. It would naturally be the first station where the captives would rendezvous.

2. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

3. Now the LORD hath brought *it*, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.

The remarkable thing here is that a mere heathen, the captain of the king's body-guard, should express so just views of the moral causes of the ruin of Jerusalem. Did he know Jehovah, the God of the Jews, as the one supreme God? Or did he regard him as being the God of the Jews in the same sense in which Bel-merodach was the god of the Chaldeans, having power enough to punish their treachery and apostasy against himself? Or did he take this sentiment from the Lord's prophet, with little or no regard to its bearing on his own theology? The second of these suppositions is perhaps most probable.——This case does not stand alone. The same idea appears with a much wider application in chap. 50: 7: "Their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers." Yet again Rabshakeh, acting for Sennacherib, said to Hezekiah's deputies, "Am I now come up *without the Lord*, against this land to destroy it?" The Lord said unto me, "Go up

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against this land and destroy it" (Isa. 36: 10). In Rabshakeh this was a stroke of artful policy for which we need only assume that he knew that the Jews relied greatly on the favor of their God. The passage (chap. 50: 7) indicates deeper views of the moral character of Jehovah and of his rule over his people. It is a grave and exceedingly interesting question how far the character of the God of Israel as just and righteous and as the One Supreme Maker and Lord of all, was understood by the more intelligent classes in the nations adjacent.

4. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which *were* upon thy hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land *is* before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.

5. Now while he was not yet gone back, *he said,* Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.

6. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

Here the captain of the guard obeys the instructions which he had from his sovereign as stated chap. 39: 12, giving the prophet his free choice to go with the captives to Babylon, or to remain with the remnant in their own land. In the former case he had the fullest assurance of kind treatment and even of somewhat distinguished favors. In our imperfect human view, it would have been much for his comfort and welfare to have gone with the captives. His sympathies were strongly with them—not with this company alone, but with those who had gone before, as his letter to them (chap. 29) shows. He knew that they were the better portion of the Jewish people (chap. 24) and that the moral hopes of the nation lay in them; also that his own personal safety was strongly guaranteed in that country. Yet notwithstanding all these considerations, he chose to remain with these poor, weak, and as it proved, morally unreliable and treacherous people. Probably he had some intimations that this was the Lord's will, so he met this slow martyrdom with his usual moral heroism. The sequel will show that he had bitter trials with this remnant—the refuse of the Jewish population.——This Mizpah was near Jerusalem, the same which appears in the history of Samuel.

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7. Now when all the captains of the forces which *were* in the fields, *even* they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had commmitted unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon;

8. Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

These "captains of the forces in the fields" were doubtless the fragments of Zedekiah's army who fled from Jerusalem at its final capture, and scattered to escape the Chaldeans. Chap. 52: 8 states respecting Zedekiah that all his army was scattered from him. They gladly joined Gedaliah.

9. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans; dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

10. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

This solemn oath was designed to allay their fear of danger from the Chaldeans, a fear by no means unnatural, considering that they had been so recently in arms against this power. How else could they be sure of amnesty?——Gedaliah said, "I will remain here at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, *i. e.*, to meet such embassadors as they may send from time to time and to provide for the tribute which they may exact from us.——Where so many fields and vineyards were suddenly abandoned by their owners the opportunity for gathering both native and cultivated fruits would be good.

11. Likewise when all the Jews that *were* in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that *were* in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan;

12. Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.

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During the eighteen months' siege of Jerusalem many Jews would naturally flee their country and take refuge in countries adjacent. These now returned and placed themselves under the protection of Gedaliah and the Chaldean sovereign.

13. Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

14. And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

15. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know *it:* wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?

16. But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

Johanan and his fellow-officers became aware of the foul conspiracy projected by the king of the Ammonites, to be executed by Ishmael against the life of Gedaliah. Unfortunately this Gedaliah, a good, well-meaning man, was not shrewd enough for his dangerous position, but had allowed himself to be deceived by this foul assassin. Hence he would not give heed to these forewarnings of danger nor allow Ishmael to be put to death. Yet why did he not take more precaution?

CHAPTER XLI.

This chapter continues the narrative, recording the murder of Gedaliah and many of his people; the course of Ishmael; and the gathering of the remnant about Johanan the son of Kareah as their leader.

1. Now it came to pass in the seventh month, *that* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

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The Chaldeans entered and sacked the city in the fifth month (52: 12); these events occurred on the second month subsequent. In mournful celebration of this murder of Gedaliah, the Jews long observed the fast of the seventh month. (See Zech. 7: 5, and 8: 19.)——Ishmael was of royal blood, doubtless in the line of Jewish kings, although nothing more definite is known of him than this brief statement. His royal blood may have excited his envy of Gedaliah, and prompted him to this foul murder.——He appears first in this history chap. 40: 8: "They did eat bread together"—a fact specially noted as giving a yet blacker shade to his base treachery. The orientals account no pledge of fidelity more sacred than that of eating together.

2. Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

3. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, *even* with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, *and* the men of war.

After eating bread with his host, Ishmael arose and murdered him, and many others with him. That so few men as ten could have effected such a massacre, indicates how little Gedaliah had done for self-protection, and how entirely Ishmael had gained his confidence.

4. And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew *it*,

5. That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, *even* fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hands, to bring *them* to the house of the LORD.

6. And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.

7. And it was *so*, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, *and cast them* into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that *were* with him.

Here is yet another scene in this foul drama. Only the second day after, while yet the thing was not known, eighty men came from the cities of the north, Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, on their way to the desolate site of the temple at Jerusalem, upon

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which probably an altar had been erected for burnt-offerings. On their way they were passing near Mizpah. They came with beards shaven, clothes rent, every token of deep grief, probably over the lamented fall of the holy city. The miscreant Ishmael goes out to meet them; joins their party, professing to be as much afflicted as they; "weeping" as only a consummate deceiver could or would; and invites them to turn aside to Mizpah to enjoy the hospitalities of Gedaliah, still lying in his fresh gore by the foul hands of this same Ishmael. Then he falls suddenly upon them, and seems to have murdered all of them save ten men.

8. But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbare, and slew them not among their brethren.

9. Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, *was* it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: *and* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with *them that were* slain.

Ishmael's avarice and greed prevailed over his thirst for blood, so he let these men live, in the hope of plundering the stores which they said they had secreted near by.——In v. 9 the original words rendered "because of Gedaliah," are precisely *by the hand* of Gedaliah. They must refer here, not to his active, but to his passive agency, *i. e.*, by Ishmael's using his name as a decoy in reference to the last seventy. The first party were slain because they were with Gedaliah.——This pit seems to have been a huge cistern, provided to supply water in case of a siege.

10. Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that *were* in Mizpah, *even* the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

Ishmael now sets off with his captives for the country of the Ammonites.

11. But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done,

12. Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that *are* in Gibeon.

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13. Now it came to pass, *that* when all the people which *were* with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, then they were glad.
14. So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah.
15. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.

Johanan and the forces with him, who were abroad in the country gathering fruits (see chap. 40: 10), heard of these things, and nobly rushed to the rescue. They found him "by the great waters which were in Gibeon," *i. e.*, the pool of Gibeon, where Joab and Abner fought (2 Sam. 2: 13); where the ample supply of water would invite such a caravan as Ishmael had now with him to encamp. Ishmael's train gladly threw themselves into the hands of Johanan; but quite against the demands of justice, Ishmael escaped to the Ammonites.

16. Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after *that* he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, *even* mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon:
17. And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt,
18. Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

Johanan prepares to go with his people down into Egypt.—— "The habitation of Chimham" was an oriental inn or caravansary, consisting simply of shelter where a traveling caravan might rest and provide their own food and lodging. This, as it bears his name, was probably erected by Chimham, son of Barzillai, a venerable friend of king David (2 Sam. 19: 38, 39, 41). In the East men of wealth and benevolence were accustomed to provide such establishments at their own expense for the comfort of travelers. This was near Bethlehem, and on the great road from Mizpah and Jerusalem to Egypt.——The special reason with Johanan for going down to Egypt seems to have been his fear lest the Chaldeans should avenge the murder of Gedaliah upon the whole

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people. Perhaps, also, he and his people retained still some of the old sentiment that leaned so strongly away from the Chaldeans and toward the Egyptians for help. The sequel favors this view.

CHAPTER XLII.

This chapter, and the two that follow it, continue and complete the history of the remnant of Jews under Johanan who were left in Judah, but went into Egypt to perish there. In this chapter they request the prophet to pray for them, and to ask the Lord what they shall do. They receive his answer, coupled with strong intimations from the Lord that he knows they are not honest in their avowal of a purpose to follow his counsel.

1. Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,

2. And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, *even* for all this remnant (for we are left *but* a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us);

3. That the LORD thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.

In the form and the letter of it, nothing could be more appropriate than this request made to the prophet; nothing more befitting than this asking counsel from the Lord as to the way they should walk and the thing they should do. Is not the Lord infinitely wise in counsel and mighty in working to guide and to bless those who seek and accept his leading? "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3: 5, 6). With God so directing them, have his trusting children ever lacked any good thing?

4. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard *you;* behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, *that* whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare *it* unto you; I will keep nothing back from you.

5. Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to

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all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

6. Whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

The heart of this faithful prophet inwardly rejoices in view of these hopeful indications, and he promptly answers, "I will do my part. I will surely pray to the Lord as you request, and will report back to you truly the answer I may receive." They reiterate their promise to obey the Lord's word—a promise previously implied but less distinctly expressed. So far all appears fair, and we are left in the sanguine and cheering hope that this little remnant will indeed learn wisdom from the bitter experiences of the past, and will now follow the Lord honestly and fully.

7. And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah.

8. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which *were* with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest,

9. And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him;

10. If ye will still abide in this land, Then will I build you, and not pull *you* down, and I will plant you, and not pluck *you* up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.

11. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I *am* with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.

12. And I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.

No special reason appears for a delay so long as ten days other than that of moral trial, to hold the mind in a waiting attitude as a trial of faith and a means of developing a spirit that humbly waits and looks to God.——The answer was definite and plain, promising good if they would remain trustfully in the land of Judah, assuring them they need fear nothing from the Chaldeans, as to whom the Lord would amply protect them.——There is a rich and touching significance in the phraseology, "I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you." God will manifest his mercy toward them by inspiring compassion for them in the otherwise hard and selfish heart of the king of Babylon. Is not the "heart of even the king in the hand of the Lord, so that

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he may turn it whither he will, even as the rivers of water are turned?"

13. But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God,

14. Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell:

15. And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah: Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;

16. Then it shall come to pass, *that* the sword which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.

17. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them.

18. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.

The other alternative is strongly put before them. If they *will go* down into Egypt despite the Lord's friendly counsel and earnest prohibition, the very evils they were seeking to escape would surely overtake them there for their destruction. They might think to escape war, famine, and pestilence there; but assuredly they would not, but on the contrary would certainly meet them there in their most fearful forms.

19. The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.

20. For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do *it*.

21. And *now* I have this day declared *it* to you; but ye

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have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any *thing* for the which he hath sent me unto you.

22. Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go *and* to sojourn.

The phrase "Ye dissembled in your hearts" admits of this construction, "Ye made yourselves to err to the peril of your souls." The words seem to mean, not *in* your *hearts*, but *against* your *soul* or life. A strong array of cases sustains this usage of the phrase. ——The noticeable thing in these closing verses is, that the Lord distinctly assumes that the people were not honest in submitting this great question to him for his direction. He knew their hearts before they audibly answered, and therefore anticipated the very words they were about to say. It was every way befitting that the Lord should set their real heart before their own eyes, and solemnly apprise them of the ruin they were bringing on themselves by their hypocrisy. It was the most hopeful moral means he could use to arrest them in their course of sin, and turn them to repentance.——Ah, how fruitless and how ruinous are such subterfuges and dissimulations toward God! When did mortal man ever attempt them and prosper! When has such a dissembler ever failed of bringing ruin on his own soul!

CHAPTER XLIII.

The leaders of this remnant reply, refusing to accept Jeremiah as a true prophet of the Lord. They go to Egypt taking the prophet and all the people with them, and the Lord sends them another message, assuring them that the king of Babylon whom they feared would follow them into Egypt, subdue that country, and bring on the Jews the horrors of war there.

1. And it came to pass, *that* when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, *even* all these words,

2. Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there:

3. But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that

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they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.

Let it be specially noted that all the "proud men" were united in this reply, and no doubt gave to it its bold, defiant tones. Proud men love to have their own way, and of course do not love to follow God's way. Pride was the specific form of the first sin known to us in the moral universe—that of Satan and his legions. It was the ruin of this little remnant of poor and powerless Jews. ——Observe also that they did not directly and in terms discard the authority of God, though doubtless they did in their hearts. But in the form of the thing it was less revolting, and answered their main purpose equally well to deny the mission of his prophet: "Thou speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there." Their hearts were fully set on going down into Egypt. Hence, they would not believe that the God they still professed to honor, and of whom they still spake as "the Lord *our* God" had forbidden it. This is one of the most common methods of resisting the authority of God and refusing him obedience. Men object to the channel through which his will is made known to them. This is one of the expedients of sin and Satan to smooth over the way of rebellion against God. In this case those proud men slanderously charged Baruch with inciting Jeremiah against them for the alleged purpose of delivering them over to the Chaldean power for death or captivity. In all this they fully assumed that nothing but hostility to their best interests could induce men to prefer submission to the Chaldeans rather than to the Egyptians. This political feeling of hostility to the former power and of trust in the latter was intensely strong and strangely arrayed on the side of the wicked and proud against God and his true servants.

4. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.

5. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah;

6. *Even* men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah.

7. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they *even* to Tahpanhes.

The Lord by no means accepts their artful distinction: "We

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honor the Lord our God, but will not believe your words." He held them as "*not obeying* the voice of the Lord." So evermore it avails wicked men nothing to discard the Bible or any of its essential truths. God holds men responsible for accepting, understanding, believing, and obeying the plain things of his revealed word.——The king's daughters (v. 6) are those of Zedekiah as in chap. 41: 10.——Tahpanhes, otherwise called Daphne, lay in the north-east corner of Egypt, one of the border cities toward Palestine. It was manifestly a first-class city at this time (in the twenty-sixth Egyptian dynasty), being twice classed with Noph (alias Memphis), viz., Jer. 2: 16, and 46: 14, and being referred to by Ezekiel (30: 18) as the place where God would break the yokes of Egypt, turn her day to darkness, cause the pomp of her strength to cease, and send her daughters into captivity. The palace of Pharaoh-hophra was there, and there Nebuchadnezzar would set up his throne and spread his royal pavilion.

8. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying,

9. Take great stones in thy hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which *is* at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah;

10. And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.

11. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, *and deliver* such *as are* for death to death; and such *as are* for captivity to captivity; and such *as are* for the sword to the sword.

This laying of great stones by the prophet in the clay of a brick-kiln, near the entrance of the king's house, was certainly a real transaction and not a thing of mere vision, for this was to be done "in the sight of the men of Judah." Such a transaction would serve to impress more strongly the words of his propheoy that the king of Babylon would certainly come there and set up his throne upon those very stones.——V. 11 must be understood as involving the destruction of at least the greater part of these Jewish exiles. They were especially among those doomed to death, the sword and captivity.

12. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace.

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13. He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that *is* in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

Some at least of these gods of Egypt, in whose temples the Lord would kindle a fire, were representatives of the sun as Beth-shemesh ("House of the Sun") intimates. They were supposed by the Egyptians to have dominion over fire. Hence, the special significance of this doom, "I, the Lord Jehovah, will burn them with fire," to show their vain worshipers the utter powerlessness of those gods over the very elements which they were supposed to control.——Note also the Lord says, "I will kindle this fire," although the sequel shows that his agent would be the king of Babylon (vs. 10, 11).——He would burn some of those gods and take others away captive. The taking of idol-gods as trophies of victory over their worshipers, and especially of victory over those gods themselves, was common among those eastern nations. (See Dan. 11: 8.)——That he would put on Egypt as a shepherd does his robe, indicates the ease with which he takes possession of it and appropriates its spoil.——That he "would go forth and return in peace," implies that he would meet no resistance and receive no damage.——Beth-shemesh—"House of the Sun"—bears the Egyptian name "*On*" and is called by the prophets derisively "Aven" a mere *nothing* (Amos 1: 5, and Ezek. 30: 17). It was an ancient city, about twenty miles north-east from Memphis, on the east bank of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, and specially distinguished for its vast temple of the sun, some of the pillars of which are yet standing. Our passage probably refers to the pillars of this temple under the word translated "images." This city appears first in the Scriptures in the history of Joseph (Gen. 41: 45, 50, and 46: 20), his wife being a daughter of Potipherah, priest of On. The translators of the Septuagint name it as one of the cities upon which the oppressed Hebrews labored, since in Ex. 1: 11 they add to Pithom and Raamses, "and *On* which is Heliopolis." These prophecies were fulfilled not long after in the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar and the fall of Pharaoh-hophra. (See notes on chap. 44: 30.

CHAPTER XLIV.

This chapter completes the history of that remnant of Jews who went to Egypt. The prophet solemnly admonishes them, appealing to the example then fresh in their eye, of the ruin of their brethren in Jerusalem and Judah. They answer that idolatry and sin have paid well and insured them prosperity, and they will persist in their wicked ways. The Lord, by his prophet, pro-

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nounces his fearful curse on them, and gives them a sign of its execution—the fall of Pharaoh-hophra, then king of Egypt.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,

These geographical specifications show that the Jews were somewhat widely scattered over Egypt. Migdol was a second or third-class city in Lower Egypt, located some twelve miles from Pelusium. For Tahpanhes, see notes on chap. 43: 7. Noph is Memphis, a very ancient city, long the metropolis of all Egypt, near the pyramids, and famed for its huge mounds and splendid edifices. Its significant name, "*The place of the good god*," *i. e.*, Osiris, indicates that it owed much of its splendor to its associations with idol-worship. Pathros, it is generally conceded, represents Upper or Southern Egypt.

2. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they *are* a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein;

3. Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, *and* to serve other gods, whom they knew not, *neither* they, ye, nor your fathers.

4. Howbeit, I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

It would seem that this appeal would be resistless, since that ruin of their fellow-countrymen had been so terrible, and withal was so recent and fresh before their minds. But the infatuation of sin defies all reason, and sets at naught all our calculations as to what men ought rationally to do or to think.——This reference made by the Lord to his unwearied and most earnest labors through his prophets to reclaim and save the people, has appeared frequently before in the writings of Jeremiah, yet here with the addition of this striking statement of the substance of his appeal: "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" In most brief and expressive terms God implores his people not to give their hearts to idol-gods and to rebellion against himself, speaking of such a course as being "this abominable thing that I hate." What could be more detestable in his sight than such sin! It was cruel wrong against himself personally; it outraged all truth and reason; it could not fail of being utterly ruinous to themselves, both because of the horrible vices which it introduced and fostered, because of its terribly polluting influence upon their own souls, and

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because of the judgments for such sin, which, as a God both benevolent and just, he must bring upon them for it, even to their destruction.——The passage has a rich significance as applied to all sin in all ages, for all sin has the nature of idolatry. It is always rebellion against God; it always gives the heart to some other god than Jehovah; it is always "that abominable thing which he hates," and he always and every-where implores men not to do it, because it will surely be their ruin. It will of itself punish them, and over and above its own natural influences and results, God will and must make it work the ruin of all who will not repent and forsake it.

5. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.

6. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted *and* desolate, as at this day.

All this, these Jewish exiles in Egypt knew very well. They had barely escaped with life from that deluge of ruin which swept over their native land.

7. Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye *this* great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;

8. In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?

9. Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?

10. They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

Why should you go on in the same wicked course, only to bring down on your own heads here in Egypt the same fearful ruin that has desolated Judea? Do ye not remember their wickedness? their persistent pride? their stubborn refusal to obey their God? and have ye forgotten the sweeping desolations that came over

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them for their sins?——How full of force must this appeal have been!

11. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

12. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, *and* fall in the land of Egypt; they shall *even* be consumed by the sword *and* by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, *and* an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

13. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:

14. So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

Thus the Lord reiterates his threatening of judgments upon these Jews in Egypt, assuring them they could by no means escape the same utter ruin that had befallen their countrymen. Only a very small remnant, the least fraction of them, would escape (See v. 28.)

15. Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

16. *As for* the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.

17. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

18. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we

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have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

These verses are a mournful illustration of the madness of sin and of its social power over depraved hearts. All the men who knew that their wives were implicated in idol-worship were prominent in their defense. The women themselves, moreover, were not backward through modesty or any conscious sense of their degradation and guilt; but with the boldest effrontery stood up to avow their eternal devotion to their base idol-worship. Note their reasoning: "It was well with us while we were worshiping our idols." So sinners often reason. "Because vengeance against their evil work is not executed speedily," but the Lord waits long for them to repent, they account this quiet exemption from calamity as the natural prosperity of sinning. So much say they comes to us by virtue of our living as we list and doing our own pleasure. Thus they reach the conclusion that sin pays well. Satan cheats their souls into this horrible delusion and they love to have it so.—— Then the second stage of their experience is perverted to prop up the same delusion: "Since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven we have wanted all things," etc. They left off, not at all in the way of honestly forsaking their sin by turning to God in penitence, but only because the judgments of God began to fall upon them and break up the worship they would fain have continued as before; and now they strangely impute these calamities to the frown of those senseless gods whose worship they had suspended. So the devil fortifies their wicked purpose with this double delusion. He makes them think that the good they receive in God's forbearance despite of their sin is the natural fruit of their sin, and that the ills which come of their sins really come of their *not* sinning, *i. e.*, of their being broken off by the judgments of God from the sins they would fain have continued to commit. With such miserable delusions does the great deceiver of human souls mislead them to their damnation!——The "queen of heaven," worshiped especially by the women of Judea, represented either the moon or the planet Venus. The rites connected with the worship of Venus were horribly licentious and debasing. It is awful to think that the native delicacy of the female sex should ever admit of such devotion to rites so impure and polluting! Alas, for poor human nature!

19. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her, without our men?

Did not our men go with us in those rites of idol worship? No doubt they did, partakers in the same guilt, in the same pollution, in the same just and fearful doom! The social law gives fearful intensity to the power of sin!

20. Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men,

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and to the women, and to all the people which had given him *that* answer, saying,

21. The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it *not* into his mind?

22. So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, *and* because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.

23. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

Here is the first reply of the prophet to the words of those boldly impudent, determined, and abandoned men and women. He seems not to have waited for any special message from the Lord before he responded so far.——Did not the Lord remember and make note of your burning incense to idol-gods? Did it not become so horrible that he could bear it no longer, and could no longer bear *you*, but poured out the vials of his burning wrath on your city and on your land till all lay in desolation? Is not this, the prophet would say, the true view of the calamities which have befallen your native country?

24. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt:

25. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

26. Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth.

27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for

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good: and all the men of Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

28. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs.

Now the Lord sends a special message in addition to what the prophet had said before. He begins with saying, "Yes, you are committed fully to your wickedness and to your idolatry. Let that be understood. You have vowed eternal devotion to those idol-gods, and you intend to perform those vows. Of course it only remains to the mighty God, the great God of your fathers, to visit you with judgments till you are utterly consumed."——In v. 26 the Lord makes the solemn declaration that the Jews in Egypt shall no more use his name in the sacred oath. I understand this to be equivalent to saying, "I refuse to stand any longer in the relation to them of their God. I utterly disown them. They are no longer in any sense my people."——Then, shut off utterly from this relation, the way is fully opened for the Lord's exterminating curse upon them. Now the Lord will watch over them for evil, embracing every opportunity, employing every means, applying the resources of his exhaustless providence to scourge and scathe and blast them till they are consumed. A very small remnant only will escape, barely enough to be witnesses to the fearful desolation sent on their fellow-sinners, and to know whose words did stand—God's, or their own.

29. And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil:

30. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.

Finally, the Lord gives a definite sign as a guarantee and pledge of the fulfillment of these fearful threatenings. He will give Pharaoh-hophra, then on the throne of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies.——There is reason to suppose that these enemies were the Chaldeans. If so, this would imply that the Chaldean power, through the fear of which they had fled from Judea into Egypt, would follow them thither, crush down the Egyptian king, and of course come upon them with unsparing vengeance. It should be borne in mind that Chaldea and Egypt were pitted antagonists; hence, that to be the friend of the one was to be the

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enemy of the other. It is at least supposable that the king of Babylon moved on Egypt for the very purpose of chastising Pharaoh-hophra for protecting the Jews and drawing them away from his service. In this view of the case it is easy to see how certainly and fearfully this onslaught before which Pharaoh-hophra fell would involve these Jewish exiles in terrible ruin.——Now, as to the historic points here assumed, viz., that Nebuchadnezzar was the hostile king before whom Pharaoh-hophra fell, and with him these Jewish exiles also, the case stands thus: The prophecies of Jeremiah and of Ezekiel repeatedly predict the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. Those by Jeremiah plainly indicate that the Jewish exiles will fall before the same Chaldean power. See chap. 43: 8–13, where the connection of the passage involves this; and chap. 46: 13, 26, where we read, "I will punish Pharaoh and *all them that trust in him*," which would seem to have special reference to the Jews. See also Ezek. 29: 19, and 30: 10, 11, 24, 25, and 31: 11, and 32: 11.——Recurring to profane history, we find nothing against the supposition that Nebuchadnezzar invaded and subdued Egypt, overthrew Pharaoh-hophra, and terribly punished the Jewish exiles there. Berosus, as quoted by Josephus, states that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt and also Syria, Phenicia, and Arabia. (Josephus vs. Apion, 1: 19.) ——The reign of Nebuchadnezzar dates B. C. 604–561, and that of Pharaoh is dated B. C. 590, or 589–571. Further, Josephus estimates from the records of the Phenicians that Nebuchadnezzar commenced the siege of Tyre in his seventh year, *i. e.*, B. C. 597. It lasted thirteen years, and therefore closed B. C. 584. There is therefore ample time after the close of this siege and within the reign of Nebuchadnezzar for this expedition into Egypt, resulting in the death of Pharaoh-hophra.——Herodotus gives the character of this Hophra, whose name he writes "Apries," as excessively proud and vain, and represents his death as occasioned by disaffection among his subjects, who had revolted and set up another king. These events might not unnaturally be connected with the invasion of their country by Nebuchadnezzar. Mr. George Rawlinson states that little is now known of the military exploits of Nebuchadnezzar after his conquest of Jerusalem. Here therefore this point must rest.——We have now followed the prophetic history of the Jews to the point where the last feeble remnant is mainly exterminated in the land of Egypt. This portrayal of their sin and doom is exceedingly rich in its moral lessons for all subsequent ages. All along through the chapters of this prophet we have seen the developments of intense and strange infatuation as if the people had become demented and lost to all reason and conscience. It is painful to notice their insane love of idolatry and the fearfully strong committal of their hearts to their favorite idol-worship and to all those vices which had thrown their attractions round the rites of idolatry. This infatuation seems to have culminated in this miserable remnant in Egypt, just where those impressive lessons from God's past judgments ought to have opened their eyes

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at least to their peril if not to their guilt. We stand amazed at such depravity and can not wonder that the Lord should visit upon it the most terrible inflictions of his rod. The whole book of Jeremiah shows how slowly the wrath of the Lord arose against even this guilty people; how carefully he exposed to their view their great sin, and held it up in every just and appropriate light as a breach of covenant, an abuse of mercy, an insult to the great God, their Maker and Father, and as done in the face of constant warnings through his prophets, whom for a long time he had been rising early and sending. Interspersed with and following these revelations of their sin were repeated invitations to repentance and assurances of pardon, couched in most tender and touching terms, and sent from the Lord in the gentle tones and oft-flowing tears of this most affectionate prophet. Let us not fail to note that those tones and tears were only a fair representation of the heart of the Lord who selected, inspired, and sent him. Verily, all that tender sympathy, faithful reproof, long delay, and admonitory forewarnings, could do to reclaim and to save guilty men was faithfully and fervently done to save this guilty nation—but in vain. The hour of retribution must therefore come at last. It came, and its vengeance was terrible!——Does not all this history bear a startling testimony to the great facts and principles of God's moral government over nations here in time? And more than this, must we not draw from it a fearful inference as to the future doom of all incorrigible sinners who must stand singly to bear the curse of their own unpardoned sin in the world of final retribution? Out of the depths of this history, a voice comes up from its underlying truths, witnessing that the end of great sins, unrepented of, must be a great and terrible damnation. Whoever reads this history, holding his heart in contact with the facts it reveals and the truths it implies, will hear this voice whispering to him of that appalling future where destruction falls on the self-hardened sinner, and "that without remedy!" Why should not sensible, thoughtful men listen to that voice?

CHAPTER XLV.

These few words are for Baruch, who has been already before us as the faithful friend, attendant, and amanuensis of the prophet. The date is that remarkable fourth year of Jehoiakim, when (see chap. 36) Baruch wrote out the first complete copy of Jeremiah's prophecies, and was directed by the prophet to read it in the temple before all the people. If we follow closely the dates as given in this chapter and in chapter 36, we must conclude that Baruch had written out this first complete copy, and had also probably received his commission to go on the ensuing fast-day and read it to the people, but had not yet gone when this message came for

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him. For this public reading took place in the fifth year of Jehoiakim, and led on rapidly to the scenes described in chap. 36: 9–32. From the anticipation of these scenes Baruch recoiled, drew back, and received this gentle rebuke and most appropriate admonition. It came in good time to prepare him for the trial through which he was so soon to pass.

1. The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch;

3. Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.

It does not appear that Baruch shrunk back from the labor of writing these prophecies for his elder friend. He had already done this work. But the commission to go into the midst of the temple and read them, awakened serious fears for his own personal safety. Not without some good reason either; for the record shows (chap. 36: 17) that the princes questioned him closely, and indeed sharply, to learn how he came by such alarming prophecies. Moreover, the exiles in Egypt (chap. 43: 3) directly charged upon him the atrocious crime of instigating the prophet against them, and (tacitly) of himself giving Jeremiah the messages which came from the Lord. Hence he says, "Alas for me in my hard lot! The Lord adds grief to grief upon me; I am weary with my groaning; I find no rest." Such fruitless labors, such unceasing anxieties, such perils thickening at every step, such breaking up of all my cherished pursuits for a comfortable livelihood—what is to be the end of this? His heart sickens, and he would manifestly beg to be released from such a life.

4. Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, *that* which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.

5. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek *them* not: for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

The Lord's special message to him begins by assuring him that the whole land is doomed to wasting and desolation, implying that this must include his little patrimony, and therefore must crush out all his fond hopes of rest and competence in a land so guilty

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and so cursed as this.——"Seekest thou great things for thyself?" Dost thou think wishfully of a quiet home and a pleasant patrimony, with the ease, comfort, and competence that might, to a certain extent, be fitly sought for in a state of public peace and prosperity? Dismiss all such thoughts. Wouldst thou have a fair fame, untarnished by slanderous imputations? Cease to expect it. Wouldst thou have at least a quiet exemption from all personal danger? Thou canst not have even that, for I will bring evil upon all flesh; not on Judah alone, but on all its neighboring nations; and the utmost I can do for thee is to guarantee that thy life shall not be sacrificed, but "shall be unto thee for a prey wherever thou goest"—a thing imperiled, but not lost.——Baruch was young and of less experience than his venerable friend, through whom God was now speaking. His mind had not yet opened to the breadth and depth of those sacrifices which every true man must cheerfully make for God and his country among a people so guilty and so surely doomed as his own. Jeremiah had already passed through several seasons of stern mental conflict and purifying discipline: Baruch had them yet to pass. This was one of his first lessons: "Forego all your schemes of personal good. As for yourself alone, be content with your bare life as the best God can give; and having the assurance of life, make every sacrifice to which God may call you, most cheerfully. If you can do any thing for the truth of God; any thing to bear testimony against the sins of your countrymen; any thing to lessen the labors and lighten the griefs of the patriarchal prophet under whose shadow you walk; do it cheerfully, and even gladly. But dismiss for ever all aspirations after great things for yourself.—— It is pleasant to think of Jeremiah as having thoroughly sounded the depths of this counsel and drank in its spirit. He had ample occasion to act upon it subsequently. Think of him so soon after arrested by the savage Jehoiakim and some of his kindred spirits; cast into dungeons, darkness, and mire; starved, tortured, and in peril of his life; kept in confinement months and years during the reign of Zedekiah; yet still charged with successive messages more and more severe and terrible to the king on his throne, and to his princes inflated with pride. Think of him yet further on as choosing, for some reason not clearly known to us, to forego better protection and far more welcome society in Chaldea, to follow the fortunes of the refuse portion of the people that wandered down into Egypt. Did he go there for the same reason that led his great Master to preach the gospel to the poor, and to pour out his warmest tears in sympathy over their shepherdless wanderings? Was it that his Christian instincts prompted him to go where nothing great or good for himself could be reasonably expected? Had he reached that rare height in Christian experience where the soul truly feels and can honestly say, "None for me but Christ! Enough for me that I may have God for my friend and for my portion! That I may have the more of God, let him take from me all else that he wills: it shall only enhance

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my joy in his light and favor."——Ah venerable, wonderful man! It would gratify us to know more of thy heart-experience in these last recorded scenes of thine earthly life. In lack of these, we shall surely admire the steadfast patience and unswerving fidelity of thy prophetic life among a people so utterly lost to virtue.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Here commences a series of prophecies, unique and peculiar, respecting several heathen nations with whom the Jews stood in more or less intimate relations, in every case predicting ruin and desolation. The style reaches a loftier strain of Hebrew poetry than we find in any other portion of Jeremiah's writings.——This chapter relates to Egypt, which here comes first for the same reason that she is named first in chapter 25: 19. See notes there. Indeed this entire series of prophecies (chap. 46–51) may be considered as an expansion of that passage (chap. 25: 15–38). What is there only briefly indicated is here drawn out in detail.

1. The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles;

2. Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

"*Against Egypt*," in the beginning of v. 2, should be "*concerning* Egypt"—indicating the general subject of discourse, corresponding to other captions, *e. g.*, "concerning Moab" (chap. 48: 1), "concerning the Ammonites" (chap. 49: 1), and "concerning Edom" (chap. 49: 7), and so onward vs. 23, 28, and also 23: 9. The Hebrew preposition means *concerning*, in reference to, and not *against*. Hence while v. 1 is the caption of the entire passage (chap. 46–51), v. 2 is the caption of the first part of this prophetic history, viz., what pertains to Egypt, comprised in this chap. 46. ——This entire passage must be accounted as *prophecy*, revealed to the prophet by the Lord before the events. In this chapter probably the prophecy preceded the first events of the series which it predicted by only a short interval.——The battle at Carchemish, in which Nebuchadnezzar smote Pharaoh-necho, is one of the great decisive battles of history. It sent the Chaldean power up and the Egyptian down for at least the next seventy years.—— This city lay on the upper Euphrates. Both for its magnitude and for its position it was a military point of much importance. Pharaoh-necho was marching upon it when king Josiah went out to meet him and fought him, but fell at Megiddo (2 Chron. 35: 20).

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It is supposed that Necho took the city in this expedition and held it about four years till this great battle—the first decisive exploit of the young prince Nebuchadnezzar. The latter followed up his great victory with energy; drove the vanquished Egyptians back to Egypt; himself subdued Syria and indeed most of the powers of Western Asia; came upon Jerusalem and subjugated it in this very year, the fourth of Jehoiakim; and then returning home, ascended the throne recently made vacant by the death of his father. The entire political aspect of Asia was suddenly changed.

3. Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.

4. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with *your* helmets; furbish the spears, *and* put on the brigandines.

5. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed *and* turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: *for* fear *was* round about, saith the LORD.

6. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape! they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.

Addressing the Egyptians, the prophet summons them to prepare for terrific battle. He gives startling intimations that they will be worsted in the fight: "Why have I seen them dismayed and turned back?" This prophetic vision soon became momentous history.——"Brigandines" were coats of mail, much used in ancient warfare, but long since abandoned.

7. Who *is* this *that* cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?

8. Egypt riseth up like a flood, and *his* waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, *and* will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.

The word rendered "flood" (v. 7) very commonly means the Nile. The figure looks to its annual inundations. "Who is this that cometh up like the rising overflowing Nile, and that dashes like the mighty rivers in their spring freshets?" It is Egypt, going forth to overrun and subdue the whole earth.

9. Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians that handle *and* bend the bow.

10. For this *is* the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day

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of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

The tone of this passage is, Go on, Egypt; push forward thy squadrons of horsemen; let thy war-chariots dash madly along; call forth the hosts of Ethiopians, Libyans, Lydians—dependencies and allies of ancient Egypt—for every man will be needed. But know ye that this is the great day for the Lord Jehovah. He has a great sacrifice in the north country whither ye are going and his sword will drink its fill of human blood!

11. Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines *for* thou shalt not be cured.

12. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, *and* they are fallen both together.

Alas! the fatal blow has fallen on Egypt! You may see it in the changed tone of the prophet's graphic touches: "Let Egypt go to Gilead and take balm thence to heal her deep and deadly wounds!" But all Gilead can avail her nothing! All the nations hear the shame of her utter defeat. She is hopelessly smitten.

13. The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come *and* smite the land of Egypt.

14. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee.

15. Why are thy valiant *men* swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them.

Suddenly the scene changes. We are no longer at Carchemish on the Euphrates, but in Egypt itself. The victor there is the invader and conqueror here. At no long interval Nebuchadnezzar follows his smitten foe to his own cities to chastise and subjugate him more thoroughly.——For some notice of the cities named in v. 14, see notes on chap. 43: 7 and 44: 1.——In the usual manner of the prophets when predicting an invasion, Jeremiah summons Egypt to be in readiness for the devouring sword, and but too plainly intimates that her valiant men will be swept away. God is against them; how can they stand?

16. He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword.

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17. They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a noise; he hath passed the time appointed.

"He" (the Lord) "made many to fall." Then her mercenaries and her allies from other countries (v. 9) forsake her failing fortunes and turn to their own homes—a natural result of disaster to a kingdom largely dependent on foreign legions to fight her battles.——In v. 17, instead of reading, "Pharaoh is but a *noise*," I prefer to read, "*Pharaoh is ruined*," is undone! He has passed the point of his destiny, the point where his fortunes might have been retrieved and himself and his kingdom saved.

18. *As* I live, saith the King, whose name *is* The LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor *is* among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, *so* shall he come.

Two constructions have been given to this verse: (1.) Although thou, Egypt, dost imagine thyself firm as Tabor among the mountains, and Carmel projecting into the sea, yet prepare for captivity, etc. (2.) The great King, Jehovah of hosts, solemnly affirms that thy destroyer, O Egypt, shall come with surpassing majesty and power, as Tabor stands preëminently glorious among the mountains and Carmel by the sea; therefore prepare for going into captivity. ——The latter must be accepted here as giving truly the point of the comparison—Nebuchadnezzar in preëminence and power like Tabor and Carmel.——Tabor lifts its summit seventeen hundred and fifty-five feet, and Carmel fifteen hundred above the level of the Mediterranean.——With majesty befitting the subject, God assumes here the descriptive epithet, "The King, whose name is Jehovah of hosts." Being King of the hosts of heaven, why should he not also be recognized as King of nations in this lower world? So also chap. 48: 15, and 51: 57.

19. O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.

20. Egypt *is like* a very fair heifer, *but* destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north.

21. Also her hired men *are* in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, *and* are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, *and* the time of their visitation.

Noph (Memphis), was her chief and proudest city. The figures which set Egypt before us are significant. A fair heifer, specially inviting for the slaughter—her butchers are at hand from the north country. May there not be here a tacit allusion to the stupid veneration and worship paid in Egypt to the *cow*? as if the prophet

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would taunt her folly and weakness, and open her eyes to the infatuation of such worship!——Her hired men, her mercenary soldiers, are like fatted bullocks. Let loose and thoroughly frightened, they stampede and are gone! Alas for her dependence on paid foreign troops!

22. The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.

23. They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it can not be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and *are* innumerable.

24. The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.

Whether this voice like that of the hissing serpent refers to Egypt hissing out of her den, or to the Chaldeans, coming down in force upon her, is not entirely clear. The figure is dropped so soon that no decisive data appear for determining that point. The main figure of the passage is an army of wood-choppers coming up, in hand, to fell the vast forests of Egypt. Here there is no doubt that the wood-chopping hosts are those of Chaldea; the forest to be felled, Egypt.

25. The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and *all* them that trust in him:

26. And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD.

This poetic and boldly descriptive prophecy closes here with a very plain statement of the main facts of the case.——The Hebrew translated "Multitude of Noph" should probably be read, "The god Amon of No"—No being the old Egyptian city of Thebes—the vast city of Upper Egypt, and Amon the principal god worshiped there. His name became incorporated, it would seem, into the name of the city, since Nahum (chap. 3: 8) has it "No-Amon."——God will bring terrible judgments upon the great and idolatrous cities of Egypt; upon all those idol-gods and "upon all who put their trust in her"—which last clause refers plainly to the Jews, and especially to that last feeble remnant whose history we followed in chap. 41–44.——The passage closes with an intimation that the control of the Chaldeans over Egypt would ultimately

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cease and better days return.——On the fulfillment of this prophecy, see notes on chap. 44.

27. But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make *him* afraid.

28. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I *am* with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

Precisely these words occurred chap. 30: 10, 11. Hence, the critics naturally raise the question whether they legitimately belong here. Upon which it may be said, Jeremiah often repeats himself, no one of the prophets being so much addicted as he to the repetition of set phrases. Further, the passage is naturally connected with the context here as well as there. The key-note to it is given in the last clause of v. 26. As Egypt would survive this Chaldean devastation and come up again, so and much more surely would the Lord's servants, Jacob and Israel. It is every way fitting, that among predictions of sore calamity should be interspersed some notes of consolation and hope to strengthen the hearts of God's real children.

CHAPTER XLVII.

This short chapter is devoted to the Philistines—for several centuries the formidable border enemies of the Hebrew people on the west and south-west. They come in the same order here (next after Egypt) as in chap. 25: 19, 20.——Several other prophets speak of the fall of the Philistine principalities, *e. g.*, Ezek. 25: 15–17; Amos 1: 6–8; Zeph. 2: 4–7; and Zech. 9: 5–7.

1. The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

The historical allusion, "Before Pharaoh smote Gaza," has been explained by critics variously. Among these various opinions, none seems to me more probable than that of Rosenmüller, who thinks it was Pharaoh-necho, and that the time was before his battle with Josiah at Megiddo (2 Kings 23: 29), and perhaps when

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on his way from Egypt to the Euphrates. At this time the Chaldean power had not yet risen to formidable proportions. Carchemish fell into the hands of this same Necho soon afterward, and no human sagacity could foresee that the Chaldeans from the north country would ever overpower and desolate the cities of the Philistines. Their danger seemed to lie in the opposite direction, *i. e.*, from Egypt on the south. These circumstances suggest a pertinent reason for this note as to the point of time *before* which the prophecy was revealed.

2. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.

3. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong *horses*, at the rushing of his chariots, *and at* the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to *their* children for feebleness of hands;

A flood of waters, coming down with the power of a deluge, is a common and pertinent figure for an invading and conquering army. Here it refers to the Chaldeans. So terrible will be the tramp of his cavalry and the thunder of his chariots, that under the general consternation, fathers in their flight will not look back after their children, being consciously too feeble to afford them any protection or help.

4. Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, *and* to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.

This verse incidentally involves a deep question as to the origin of the Philistines, who are said here to be "the remnant of the country of Caphtor." The word rendered "country" indicates a maritime region, *i. e.*, either an island or country bordering on the sea. The identity of Caphtor is in grave dispute, opinions being divided between Cappadocia, the Island of Crete, Cyprus, and some portion of Egypt. The historical data are too few and too dim with the darkness of the unhistoric ages to justify positive conclusions. I incline to accept Crete as the ancient Caphtor.—— This "day that comes to spoil all the Philistines, and cut off helpers from Tyre and Zidon," looks primarily to the conquests made by the Chaldean power, the first installment of which fell on those principalities in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. At that time Nebuchadnezzar subjected Syria and most of the sovereignties of Western Asia. His armies were there again at the final destruction of Jerusalem B. C. 588, near which time he besieged

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Tyre for thirteen years, mainly destroying the ancient city. To these conquests our verse has primary reference.——All those cities of the Philistines, together with Tyre and Zidon, suffered severely from the arms of Alexander the Great about B. C. 332. To this scene of war and devastation the prophecies of Zechariah (chap. 9: 5–7) specially refer. They form a part of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

5. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off *with* the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?

Gaza is one of the oldest cities known to history. It appears Gen. 10: 19 as one of the border cities of the Canaanites; it is standing to-day with more population than Jerusalem. It has a record in New Testament history (Acts 8: 26); it figured conspicuously during the crusades; and since the days of Abraham has never ceased to be a city of very considerable strength and importance. The prophet here does not say it "shall be rooted up," as was said of Ekron (Zeph. 2: 4), of which, therefore, no trace has been seen for ages; but "baldness comes upon Gaza," by which some commentators understand that she was literally shorn of her beauty by the ravages of war. Others take baldness, plucking off the hair, as a token of great mourning. Either construction amounts to about the same thing, since her public mourning must imply the desolations of war as its occasion. If the last clause, "How long wilt thou cut thyself?" be explained as another indication of bitter grief, it strengthens this latter view of the word "baldness." (Compare 1 Kings 18: 28.)——Ashkelon, the most western among the great cities of the Philistines, close on the sea-coast, is spoken of as suffering severely, "being cut off." Little of it remains to this day, though its site is known with reasonable certainty. It has long since "been cut off" as to any political power or importance.

6. O thou sword of the LORD, how long *will it be* ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.

7. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.

This bold apostrophe to the sword of the Lord is exquisitely beautiful. The prophet sees in the future a series of fearful devastations coming on those doomed cities of the Philistines; his poetic genius conceives of the Lord's instrument as itself living, conscious, and responsible, and he cries out, "O thou sword of the Lord, why not desist from that work of slaughter? How long ere thou wilt rest? Betake thyself to thy scabbard, rest, and be still." Then the spirit of prophecy shuts off the possibility of this,

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and the prophet gives us his outlook into the future in these expressive words, "How can it rest, seeing the Lord hath given it a commission against Ashkelon and the cities along the sea-shore? It must execute the will of God!"——The poetic beauty and indeed the moral power of these verses have rarely been surpassed by any of the old Hebrew prophets.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

This chapter predicts the judgments of God on Moab. This ancient people, descendants of Lot, occupying the country north of Edom and east of the Dead Sea, appear often in sacred history, and usually in hostile attitude to the people of Israel.——This chapter is remarkably parallel with Isa. 15 and 16, not only in its general course of thought, but in its particular phrases. Some have supposed that both Isaiah and Jeremiah copied largely from some common source, a prophecy against Moab older than either; but as nothing is known of any such older prophecy, or of its author, this opinion can be nothing but a theory. It seems to me that too little is actually known to justify a very high degree of confidence in it. The plea for it, that those two chapters of Isaiah (15 and 16) are not in his style, and, therefore, must not be accepted as original with him, assumes to know more of his possible and impossible variations of style than can be known from the data now existing.——Since Isaiah wrote about one hundred years before Jeremiah, there is no difficulty in admitting that the latter borrowed his phraseology to some extent from his elder brother. The point has no vital importance. I pass it without further notice.

1. Against Moab thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded *and* taken: Misgab is confounded and dismayed.
2. *There shall be* no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from *being* a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee.

The first two words are the caption, stating the subject—"*Concerning Moab.*"——Nebo is a well-known mountain on the east of Jordan. (See Deut. 34: 1.) Kiriathaim, Misgab, Heshbon, and Madmen were cities of Moab. Heshbon, her capital, seems to be thought of as already in the hand of the enemy, who is now devising plans to subjugate the whole country.

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3. A voice of crying *shall be* from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction.

4. Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.

5. For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.

6. Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.

The outcries of warriors spoiling her cities, and the bitter wails of the spoiled and fleeing people, are heard throughout the land. Luhith, on the side of the mountain as the fugitives ascended, and Horonaim, on the other side where they descended, are here named in connection to say that this sorrowful troop wept as they went up, and wailed as on the other side they went down.—— "The heath in the wilderness" is here (as in chap. 17: 7) the *naked one*, robbed, stripped, and fleeing with absolutely nothing but life.

7. For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity *with* his priests and his princes together.

8. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken.

9. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.

Moab had probably trusted in her great exploits and in her accumulated treasures. Therefore is she doomed to be taken forcibly by her enemies. Chemosh was the national god of Moab (see 1 Kings 11: 7, and 2 Kings 23: 13,) whose worship Solomon introduced and Josiah exterminated.——That the god himself with his priests and princes together goes into captivity, is a triumph of Jehovah over them to show all people their utter vanity.

10. Cursed *be* he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed *be* he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

The word rendered "deceitfully" is rather *remissly*, with slack hand. The case contemplated is not that of one who pretends to do the work better than he actually does, but of him who fails to do it vigorously and effectually, as the last clause being parallel shows—"who" through false pity "restrains his sword from

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blood." The spirit of the Lord and consequently of his prophet is fired with the sense of justice and its now inexorable demands. The Moabites must fall, and woe to him whom God appoints as his executioner if he shrink from his work! The passage reminds us of Judges 5: 23: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

11. Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.

12. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.

A nation reposing quietly in its own homes and country and not ousted by resistless invaders, is here compared to wine standing long on its lees and not racked off into other vessels. As wine so standing acquires a bad flavor from its foul sediments, so a nation at ease becomes vain in its national pride, and may be radically benefited in national character by being racked off into captivity. ——Therefore, saith the Lord, I will send upon Moab, not "wanderers" but emptyers, who shall turn up his vessel and pour off the wine into other vessels pure and clean. So the word rendered "wanderers" properly means. This word looks to the figurative and not to the literal sense as the last clause of this verse does also; "empty his vessels," etc.

13. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence.

"Chemosh" was the national god of Moab. See notes on v. 7. They shall be ashamed of this god, losing all confidence in his power to help; or rather confounded by the sore disappointment of their confidence in his protection, even as the house of Israel found all their reliance in Bethel utterly vain.

14. How say ye, We *are* mighty and strong men for the war?

15. Moab is spoiled, and gone up *out of* her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name *is* the LORD of hosts.

16. The calamity of Moab *is* near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast.

17. All ye that are about him bemoan him; and all ye

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that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, *and* the beautiful rod!

18. Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from *thy* glory, and sit in thirst; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, *and* he shall destroy thy strongholds.

All in vain are their boasts of might or strength for war.—— With exquisite beauty and force these words are said to be the words of "the King, that great King of nations, whose name is Jehovah of hosts." The Lord of the armies of heaven, the Captain of that vast celestial host of starry worlds, may well speak with majesty of the fall of a power so small and yet so proud as Moab. (Compare chap. 46: 18, and 51: 57, and Isaiah 47: 4, and 48: 2.)——"Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon" by a very common Hebrew idiom means, the inhabitants of Dibon. When the prophet says "they sit in thirst," he thinks of them as far out on the parched and waste desert, driven from their homes into captivity and desolation.

19. O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, *and* say, What is done?

20. Moab is confounded; for it is broken down: howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled,

21. And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath,

22. And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim,

23. And upon Kiriathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon,

24. And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near.

25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD.

Aroer lay on the river Arnon, which was the northern border of Moab. Her inhabitants are summoned to mark the flight of the refugees of Moab, and ask them what has happened. The next verses give the answer; spoiling, ruin, judgments, have come down upon Moab and upon her long peaceful and prosperous cities.—— The "horn" and the "arm" are natural symbols of power.

26. Make ye him drunken; for he magnified *himself* against the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision.

27. For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he

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found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.

"Make him drunken" refers to the wine-cup of Jehovah's indignation, they that drink which are "moved and mad" and rush infatuated to ruin. See Jer. 25: 15–17, 27, and notes there. The figure is carried out here in its strong sense. The reason for this judgment from God upon Moab is his great pride, as the context develops more fully (v. 29). He should be made an object of scorn in his vomit, because he had scorned Israel, the people of God. The question, Was he (Israel) found among thieves? asks, Was it for his own fault that you derided him? Did you catch him stealing? (See chap. 2: 26.) The Lord implies that Moab's scorn of Israel was *not* for good cause, but came of his great national pride, and perhaps of his hatred of them as the people of the true God. Yet the passage may allude to the violent seizure by Moab of the country of the two and a half tribes—an act which would involve an insolent disregard of the national rights of those tribes.——The last clause of v. 27 is better read thus: "For *as often as* thou spakest of him" (in his national affliction) "thou didst nod thy head insultingly with joy." This verb, *to nod the head*, appears in this sense chap. 18: 16, and 2 Kings 19: 21: "The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at thee."

28. O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove *that* maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth.

29. We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud,) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.

30. I know his wrath, saith the LORD; but *it shall* not *be* so; his lies shall not so effect *it*.

In v. 29 the accumulation of words denoting pride and arrogance is remarkable. In this connection the word in v. 30 rendered "wrath" seems to mean *the outburst and overflowing of scorn*. It does indeed usually mean "wrath," but its primary sense is of what overleaps due bounds, is excessive, outbreaking; and in such a connection as this should refer to his insolence.——In the latter part of this verse, the words rendered "*not so*" mean, *not sound*, right; *i. e.*, empty and vain; thus: "I know his insolence, saith the Lord, and the vanity (unsoundness) of his lying boasts ("lies"); they do all things vainly, proudly. In this rendering I change the principal pause so as to attach the word "lies" to the middle clause rather than to the last. In this construction, the passage has a pertinent and forcible significance.

31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; *my heart* shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres.

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32. O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach *even* to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage.

33. And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; *their* shouting *shall be* no shouting.

34. From the cry of Heshbon, *even* unto Elealeh, *and even* unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar *even* unto Horonaim, *as* a heifer of three years old: for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate.

Some critics object to referring these words to the prophet as not in keeping with his indignant invocation of curses on him who spares Moab from slaughter (v. 10). The objection is not insuperable. The expressions in v. 10 are legitimate from the stand-point which looks out upon their great sin and the demands of divine justice. These words are equally legitimate to that other stand-point from which the prophet sees only the bitter woe of the sufferers.——"O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee more than with the weeping of Jazer, *i. e.*, with a weeping surpassing that of Jazer —an allusion no doubt patent then but lost in antiquity now.—— "Thy plants *had* gone over the sea" or the waters; they reach the sea of Jazer. As to this "sea of Jazer," if the reading in the text is correct, it was probably some small lake or pool, amply sufficient for supplying water to the luxuriant vines of Sibmah. ——In the last clause of v. 33, is a play on the two very diverse senses of the word rendered "shouting;" which means either the shouting of those who joyfully tread the grapes, or the war-shouts of victors in battle. The prophet says, the war-cry which they shall hear will be no grape-treader's shout, but one of far other significance.——In v. 34 the cry is that of the smitten Moabites in their distress, caught up and rung from one city to another over all the land. It seems to be compared to the lowing of a heifer three years old. The passage has exercised the ingenuity of critics exceedingly, but this is the best result.

35. Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods.

In this description of the judgments on Moab, it was pertinent to observe that God would exterminate all the idolaters. Idolatry had blighted her morals, debased her character, and insulted the living God: why should not his judgments smite those who "brought offerings to her high places and burned incense to her gods?"

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36. Therefore my heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and my heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches *that* he hath gotten are perished.

37. For every head *shall be* bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands *shall be* cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

38. *There shall be* lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure, saith the LORD.

39. They shall howl, *saying*, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him.

Here are clustered the prominent oriental tokens of a great public mourning. The prophet sympathizes, as is shown by his heart sounding or moaning like pipes. The central fact from which this expression comes is, that extreme grief violently convulses the bodily organs. Then the hair is torn out or shorn off; the flesh gashed; the coarsest cloth girded about the loins. People ascend the house-tops to retire from public view, as the orientals went there for secret prayer (Acts 10: 9). They howl and wail, giving expression in this plaintive way to their grief.

40. For thus saith the LORD; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.

41. Kerioth is taken, and the strongholds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

42. And Moab shall be destroyed from *being* a people, because he hath magnified *himself* against the LORD.

This destroyer, "*He* who should come like an eagle," was primarily the king of the Chaldeans. Moab fell before the same power which desolated Judah and Jerusalem.——Here we meet again, as in v. 26, with the vital truth that Moab ceased from being a nation because she had magnified herself against the living God. If all the historians who record the ultimate extinction of nations were inspired of God to give the true reasons of their fall, we should often meet this testimony, "*Perished of national pride, producing contempt of God and of fundamental morality.*

43. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, *shall be* upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD.

44. He that fleeth from the fear, shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit, shall be taken in the

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snare; for I will bring upon it, *even* upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

45. They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.

46. Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.

"Fear, the pit, and the snare," indicate that this nation perishes not by one solitary form of judgment, but rather by a succession of judgments, each succeeding one finding its victims among those who had escaped former visitations.——In v. 45, the first clause should rather be read, "The fugitives halted under the shadow of Heshbon, *powerless*," *without force;* not as in the received translation, "because of the force."——The phraseology in the latter part of the verse seems to be borrowed from those classic passages in Numbers 21: 28 and 24: 17: "For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon; a flame from the city of Sihon," etc. "Shall smite the corners of Moab," etc.——The description at the close of v. 45, "tumultuous ones," *i. e.*, loudly shouting warriors, belongs to her past rather than to her then present history. The idea is, she who *was* once famous for her fierce and turbulent warriors, now finds herself shorn of all glory and prowess.

47. Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far *is* the judgment of Moab.

In the dearth of precise historic records, it is not easy to accommodate to each other these apparently conflicting statements; on the one hand, that "Moab shall be destroyed from being a people" (v. 42) and, on the other, that "God will bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days" (v. 47). The fact seems to be, that under the Chaldean arms, shortly after Jeremiah wrote, Moab suffered severely, yet that she rallied again, and was prosperous and powerful in the age of Josephus and subsequently. But its nationality has long since utterly ceased.——The same promise of bringing again the captives is made to Egypt, chap. 46: 26; to the Ammonites, chap. 49: 6; and to the Elamites, chap. 49: 39.

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CHAPTER XLIX.

This chapter comprises five distinct prophecies, viz., of Ammon, vs. 1–6; of Edom, vs. 7–22; of Damascus, vs. 23–27; of Kedar and Hazor, vs. 28–33; and of Elam, vs. 34–39.

1. Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why *then* doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?

Ammon, like Moab, descended from Lot. His country lay north of Moab and east of that assigned to the two and a half tribes on the east of Jordan. Hence his people not unnaturally came from time to time into hostile attitude toward Israel.——Malcom, rendered here "their king," is rather the proper name of their national god. Hence this first verse implies that Ammon had taken possession of the territory of Gad. Is it because Israel has no sons to inherit after him, that the god of Ammon inherits the land of Gad, and his people dwell in the cities of Gad?——These two and a half tribes had probably been largely borne away into captivity by the Assyrian armies at the fall of the northern kingdom. God rebukes Ammon for too greedily seizing upon their territory.

2. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD.

"Therefore," *i. e.*, for this sin of usurping his neighbor's land.——In the phrase, "Her daughters shall be burned with fire," "daughters" does not mean her female children, but her adjacent towns, the suburban dependencies of the great city. The same usage appears Josh. 15: 45, 47, where the same Hebrew word meaning "daughters," is rendered "Ekron with her towns," "Ashdod with her towns," "Gaza with her towns."——Then shall Israel inherit those who had inherited her, *i. e.*, shall come into possession of the land of Ammon because Ammon had inherited her land.

3. Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, *and* his priests and his princes together.

"Run to and fro," as if wild with grief. "By the hedges," is rather by the garden walls, the country near the great cities being in a high state of cultivation. Here, as in v. 1, "Malcom" should

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have been transferred as the proper name of their god, and not translated as if a common noun. His name appears in the slightly different form of Milcom in 1 Kings 11: 5, 33, and 2 Kings 23: 13, as the tutelar god of Ammon. This god would have his own priests and his princes. The former could not be said of "*their king.*" He would not have his priests.

4. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, *saying*, Who shall come unto me?

The best critics interpret "flowing valley" as meaning a valley now flowing with blood. Why shouldest thou be proud of thy rich valleys? See how the blood is flowing there now!——She had proudly trusted in her great wealth, saying, Who can ever come to make this wealth his spoil?

5. Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth.

The last clause naturally means, There shall be none to rally her fleeing fugitives; literally, "No gatherer for the wanderers."

6. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

Here, as in the case of Egypt and Moab, the prophet intimates that Ammon shall be yet again restored to prosperity.

7. Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; *Is* wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?

This prophecy concerning Edom should be studied in connection with Obadiah, and with Ezek. 25: 12–14, and Lam. 4: 21, 22. In all these passages it is intimated that Edom is punished for his envy and cruelty toward his brethren, the posterity of Jacob. Obadiah names "his violence against his brother Jacob" his "looking on his brother in his calamity," etc. Ezekiel says, "Because Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended and revenged himself upon them," etc. Hence the judgment here predicted against Edom comes in the way of moral retribution.——Several expressions found here occur also in Obadiah.——"Teman" was the name of the country adjacent to Edom, and probably in its alliance. Its people had been celebrated for their wisdom. The apocryphal book of Baruch (chap. 3: 22, 23) bears testimony to this general reputation. Speaking of the path of true knowledge, he says, "It

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hath not been seen in Teman; the Hagarenes that seek wisdom upon earth; the merchants of Meran and of Teman; the authors of fables and the searchers out of understanding—none of these have known the way of wisdom or remember her paths."——The question now put by the Lord implies that her far-famed wisdom has perished from her, leaving her weak against foreign foes, and soon to be destroyed. In the last clause, the figure is not precisely that of vanishing as from the sight, but of being *poured away and spilled*, and so wasted.

8. Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time *that* I will visit him.

9. If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave *some* gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.

10. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself; his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbors, and he *is* not.

This call to flee implies that they would have *occasion* for flight before a resistless foe.——"Dwell deep" means, Go into thy deep caverns, the fastnesses of thy rocks, for refuge.——The "calamity of Esau" is that which is righteously due him.——Grape-gatherers and thieves would each leave something behind them, the former some gleanings; the latter what they did not need or could not carry off. But the Lord implies that the spoilers of Edom will leave her nothing. They will search out all her hidden treasures and bring every thing to desolation.

11. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve *them* alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

This passage in the midst of such a prediction of ruin on Edom is quite remarkable. If we make much account of the apparently close logical connection of the following verses with this, it is difficult to interpret it as properly a promise of good to the orphans and widows of Edom. Some have taken it as meaning only that the men should be all cut off and no help remain for the orphans and widows, save in God alone. And yet these words legitimately mean that God would be a father to those orphans, a God to be trusted by those widows if they would accept his promised grace. There were to be orphans and widows in Edom, and the pity of the great Father yearns over them.

12. For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment *was* not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and *art* thou he *that* shall altogether go unpunished? thou

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shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink *of it.*

13. For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

Those "whose judgment had not been to drink" were Israel and Judah, the Lord's covenant people. But now since the Lord has put the cup of retribution to their lips, shall not Edom too be made to drink? Certainly.

14. I have heard a rumor from the LORD, and an embassador is sent unto the heathen, *saying*, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle.

15. For lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, *and* despised among men.

The prophet sees what is all unseen to merely mortal eyes—the invisible agencies of God's providence, calling the nations, grouped together in the great Chaldean empire, to come down on Edom for her spoiling and ruin.——"For lo, I *will* make thee" stands in the Hebrew in the same tense as I *have heard* in v. 14, and I *have made* in v. 10, *i. e.*, the prophetic preter, conceiving a thing as done because seen in prophetic vision as sure. The present would well express it, "Lo, I make thee small," etc.

16. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, *and* the pride of thy heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.

The word rendered "*clefts* of the rocks" means the *refuges*, the recesses.——The descriptive points in this verse are wonderfully accurate. Petra, the ancient capital of Edom, for ages the main thoroughfare of the great trade and travel between India and Mesopotamia on the east, and Egypt and North Africa on the southwest; the seat therefore of wealth and art, perhaps of wisdom also and of culture, held a position of great military strength. It was built in a vast ravine, partly on the broad area inclosed by lofty precipitous walls of rock, which by some of nature's mighty convulsions had been rent asunder, and partly in those very fronts of lofty rock, chiseled out with immense labor so that the pillars of its temples and the apartments of its tombs and dwellings were wholly cut from the solid eternal rock. Here—her nests built high in these crags like the eagle's—old Petra sat in her pride and her strength, cherishing the vain fancy that no power could ever bring her down. But the Almighty spake and it was done!——The site of ancient Petra, for ages unknown, has been brought to light dur-

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ing the present century. A number of travelers have visited and explored it. Laborde, Dr. Robinson, and others, have given full and precise statements of its wonderful ruins, placing Petra in the front rank of those ancient witnesses who bear their silent but resistless testimony to the precision of the old prophetic descriptions and to the marvelous correspondence in the most minute details between prophecy and history—the prophecy of twenty centuries ago and the history of to-day.

17. Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof.

18. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor *cities* thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

Every word of this fearful description is fulfilled. The ancient site of Sodom and Gomorrah is scarcely more void of inhabitants this day than the site of ancient Petra. Some of her dwellings hewn from the solid rock remain, but no human beings dwell therein. They echo only to the cry of the owl and the scream of the vulture. (Isaiah 34: 11–15.)

19. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who *is* a chosen *man, that* I may appoint over her? for who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me?

20. Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.

These verses re-appear in the prophecy against Babylon chap. 50: 44, 45. V. 19 is somewhat difficult, especially because the allusions to the various parties introduced are not altogether clear. ——The lion coming up from the thickets of Jordan against the perennial pasture grounds ("habitation of the strong") is the Chaldean king, or at least the hostile power which desolates and subdues Edom. Edom herself is the pasture-ground and her people the sheep before this lion. The following paraphrase will present the course of thought and the action of the several parties.——"Behold, as the lion comes up from the thickets of Jordan against the pastures full of sheep, so shall the hostile foe come up against the perennial pastures of Edom; for I will nod and make the people of Edom run as sheep from their pas-

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ture, and who is the choice man whom I may put in charge over her country? Who is like me in power that he should withstand me, and who shall call me to account? and who is the shepherd-king of Edom that can stand against me," *i. e.*, to save his flock from the devouring lion?——The lion coming up from Jordan appears as a figure chap. 12: 5, where see notes.—— "Perennial pastures" as applied to Edom may be compared to the figure of wine on the lees as said of Moab. Edom has enjoyed his pastures undisturbed for ages; no lion has come up to scatter his flocks and desolate his pasture-lands; but now his time has come. ——"I will nod or wink and make him run" means as expressed in our English tradition, "I will *suddenly* make him run."——To "appoint one the time" is the ancient phrase for a legal indictment and summons. Who shall prosecute me before the court for this proceeding, *i. e.*, set himself against me as an opponent or an antagonist?——In v. 20 our translation fails to preserve the figure and give the true sense. The lion is still here. He pulls out of the fold and drags along on the ground the Edomite sheep as if they were the least of the flock, only feeble lambs before him. He makes both them and their pasture-lands wholly desolate. Hence it is not the least of the flock that "drag out" but the lion that "drags *them* out."

21. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall; at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red Sea.

22. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The cry of their fall reaches even to the Red Sea. Probably by the Red Sea is meant the Elanitic or eastern arm which terminated at Akabah. This would be the extreme southern border of Edom. (See 1 Kings 9: 26.) "King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom." This manifestly was not the western but the eastern arm of the great Arabian Sea.—— The figure changes from the lion v. 19, to the eagle v. 22. The conquering foe is still the same. Edom, otherwise called Bozrah, falls before him. For these other figures, see chap. 48: 40, 41.

23. Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad; for they have heard evil tidings: they are faint-hearted; *there is* sorrow on the sea; it can not be quiet.

24. Damascus is waxed feeble, *and* turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on *her:* anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.

25. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy!

26. Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets,

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and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of hosts.

27. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

Hamath and Arpad (otherwise called Arvad) were cities north of Palestine, probably the chief cities of independent sovereignties. They were at that time smitten with consternation, hearing that Damascus had fallen before an invading force. They apprehended that their turn must come next. Arpad was near the Mediterranean Sea. Hence perhaps the clause, "Sorrow on the sea;" or the reading may be, "Their agitation is like that of the sea," which can not be quiet. Some good critics favor this reading and sense.——V. 25 may be understood as the language of any one of the inhabitants of Damascus: "How is the city of my pride" (which I have praised) "and of my joy abandoned of all good!" What good has not forsaken it! What calamity has not befallen it!——"Therefore" (v. 26) does not indicate here a logical inference from what precedes, but should be read "*correspondingly;*" accordingly, her young men fall, etc. Along with the utter fall of the city came the slaughter of her warriors.——Inasmuch as the prophecy against Kedar refers to Nebuchadnezzar as the destroyer, and as the same is said also of Egypt (chap. 46: 26), it is highly probable that most if not all of these prophecies contemplate the same scourge and "hammer of the nations"—the more so from the manifest correspondence between these chapters 46–49 and chap. 25: 15–25.

28. Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east.

29. Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear *is* on every side.

30. Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you.

31. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, *which* dwell alone.

32. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil: and I will scatter into all winds them *that are* in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD.

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33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, *and* a desolation forever: there shall no man abide there, nor *any* son of man dwell in it.

Kedar (the dark-skinned), a son of Ishmael, gave his name to an ancient Arab tribe distinguished for wealth and power. It long held possession of the north-west district of Arabia proper, and comes frequently to view in the Scriptures, *e. g.*, Isa. 21: 13–17, and 42: 11, and 60: 7, and Ezek. 27: 21.——Hazor, if a name for an Arab sovereignty, is less known. There was a strong city and sovereignty of that name in the north of Canaan when Joshua conquered the country, but that people were not known in that country in the time of Jeremiah. Probably this Hazor, so closely associated with Kedar, is also an Arab tribe.—— The Lord commissioned Nebuchadnezzar to go and smite those children of the east. The description in v. 29 is of a nomadic race, whose wealth consisted in their tents and flocks, with a few simple utensils and also camels.——The directions, "Flee, get you far off, dwell deep," were precisely adapted to their habits, describing the very things they do when attacked by a resistless foe—mount their camels, flee far off, plunge into the depths of their vast deserts, where no enemy not thus furnished with animals for the desert can follow them.——In v. 31, "Arise, get you," etc., like the same words in v. 28, are addressed to the king of Babylon. These Arab sovereignties were dwelling carelessly, with no apprehensions of danger. Arabs never protect themselves with "gates and bars." Their camels and fleet horses are their only reliance for safety.——Yet despite of this protection, usually ample, the Lord will bring on them a fearful desolation.——The Hebrew phrase rendered "Those that are in the utmost corners," means men having the corners of their beards shorn—a designation of contempt often given to the Arabs of the desert. See the same phrase chap. 9: 25, and 25: 23.

34. The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,

35. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might.

36. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

37. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, *even* my fierce anger, saith the LORD; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them:

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38. And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD.

39. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, *that* I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

Elam is sometimes confounded with Persia, and does in some cases represent Persia, but was anciently a distinct kingdom, in very ancient times one of great power, for Chedorlaomer king of Elam seems to have headed the powerful allied army from the east in the first war of extant history (Gen. 14: 1–12). Little is known of its subsequent history.——In the Scriptures Elam appears (Gen. 10: 22) as the son of Shem; in Gen. 14, as above, a powerful kingdom of the east; in Isaiah 21: 2, and 22: 6, as associated with Media in the conquest of Babylon, where the name would seem to represent Persia as a whole. In Ezra 4: 9, the Elamites are among the nations who composed the vast Medo-Persian empire; in Ezek. 32: 24, they are among the great uncircumcised nations who had been the terror of the world; in Jer. 25: 25, with the Medes and many others, they are doomed to drink the wine-cup of divine judgment; and in Dan. 8: 2, they are a province, probably of the Persian empire. Hence it is generally supposed that Elam is identical with the Elymais of the Greek historians—a province having Media on the north, and the Persian gulf on the south, with Babylonia on the west, and Persia proper on the east, about half as large in territory as Persia. Very probably it was subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar and brought under the world-wide sway of Babylon in the height of its glory, yet it would seem to be associated with Media and Persia in the siege and conquest of Babylon by Cyrus. See Isaiah 21: 2, and 22: 6. To that subjugation this prophecy (vs. 35–38) may refer; and v. 39 to a subsequent independence.——The precise date of this prophecy is given—unlike the usage in the other prophecies of this series, *e. g.*, against Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, and Kedar. *Why* the precise date is given here and not in those other cases does not certainly appear. Perhaps because this was nearer the time of its fulfillment, so that only by a precise date would the reader in future time have the means of knowing that the prophecy came before the events it predicted. ——The bow was a prominent weapon of war among all the ancient nations, preëminently so with the Elamites, the chief source of their strength. To "break their bow" therefore would effectually crush their military power.——V. 36 indicates the widest and most diversified dispersion of her people. Our knowledge of ancient history is too imperfect to verify the accuracy of this prediction. The "Lord's setting up his throne in Elam and destroying her king and princes" indicate a complete change of dynasty, probably the very thing that took place when he set over that kingdom Nebuchadnezzar his servant. (See Jer. 25: 9, and

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27: 6, and 43: 10.)——The last verse implies that this judgment is not final, but is temporary. Probably it did not continue much if at all beyond the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

CHAPTER L.

As the catalogue of nations doomed to drink the Lord's wine-cup of judgment (Jer. 25: 15–33) enumerates substantially all the tribes and sovereignties of Western Asia and Egypt first, and Babylon after them, so this series of more expanded prophecies (chap. 46–51) gives the most prominent of those nations first, and closes with Babylon. As already suggested, this series of prophecies is manifestly an expansion of that summary statement.—— The German critics force upon us the question of the authorship of these prophecies against Babylon (chap. 50 and 51). A portion of them, respectable in number and by their scholarship and critical acumen, maintain that Jeremiah can not be the author of these two chapters, although they stand in his book, and are affirmed to be his (chap. 51: 59–64). Maurer, one of the most candid of this class, may represent their views. He says, Though the prophecy itself claims to have been written by Jeremiah (chap. 50: 1, and 51: 59, 60, 64), and in the fourth year of Zedekiah, yet it can not be his writing.——(1.) Because it represents Jerusalem as already taken, and its temple as already destroyed. (See chap. 50: 17, 28, and 51: 24, 34, 35, 49–51.)——(2.) Because the writer exhorts the exiles to flee from Babylon (50: 8, and 51: 6, 45), advice the very opposite from that which the true Jeremiah gave them (chap. 29: 5–9, and 27: 4–8, and 42: 9–22).——(3.) This writer represents Babylon as doomed to fall *very soon* (chap. 50: 2, 3), while Jeremiah puts it at the distance of at least seventy years (chap. 25: 11, 12, and 29: 10).——(4.) This writer speaks of the Medes as preparing destruction against Babylon (chap. 51: 11, 28); but the true Jeremiah saw the Medes (chap. 25: 25) only as grouped with many other nations to drink the cup of doom. Such a difference of views could not (he claims) exist in the same man so near the same time. He thinks therefore that the prophecy must have been written after Cyrus had gained a great victory over Neriglissar king of Babylon (about B. C. 556), which greatly augmented the power of the Medes, and weakened Babylon. This was past the middle point of the seventy years' captivity.——To all these arguments of Maurer and the German critics, the answer is at hand. (1.) Jeremiah was not merely a *man;* he was also a *prophet of God.* Hence, he was not dependent upon his knowledge of history, or his personal observation, or his shrewdness in forecasting future results from present indications. The Lord showed him what no human eye could see, and taught him

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what to say and to write. This is the claim made continually by the documents themselves: "The word that *the Lord* spake against Babylon by Jeremiah the prophet" (chap. 50: 1); "Thus saith the Lord of hosts," etc., often as in chap. 51: 58; "Then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place," etc., (51: 62). Hence, the fact that Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Zedekiah, speaks by anticipation and in prophecy of Jerusalem and its temple as destroyed, creates not the least difficulty. Nor does the fact that he saw the Medes preparing war against Babylon create any sort of difficulty. Did not the Lord know that fact as early as the reign of Zedekiah?——(2.) This prophecy was written especially for the exiles in Babylon. It was sent to them (chap. 51: 59–64), having among its objects to impress them with a sense of God's retributive justice on Babylon as well as on their own then captive people; to prevent them from identifying themselves too closely with the fortunes, the interests, the society, the idolatry, and the doom of proud Babylon; and not least, to prepare them to break up their homes and return to their native land when the Lord's time should have come.——(3.) It is certainly safe to assume that Jeremiah expected them to read this prophecy in connection with all he had before sent them in his letter (chap. 29: 10), or elsewhere (*e. g.*, chap. 25), as to the duration of their captivity there. With an exile before them spanning two full generations, he might well exhort them at first to build houses and make homes; and then, in predicting the final fall of Babylon at the end of seventy years, exhort them to be in readiness to flee out of her and return to their land. With those earlier prophecies in their hand they were in no danger of supposing that these chapters predicted the fall of Babylon immediately.——In short, when the fact of divine inspiration is accepted according to the constant and consistent tenor of these writings, and according to all the evidence that bears upon the case, and when moreover due regard is had to the special object of these chapters and the standpoint of view from which they were written, all the critical difficulties urged by Maurer and others vanish. Every thing is as we should legitimately expect. All is rational and pertinent.

1. The word that the Lord spake against Babylon *and* against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

2. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, *and* conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

3. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

Remarkably, *before* Chaldea became a first-class power—*before*

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Babylon became the wonder of the world and the first city of her age—this humble prophet of Anathoth announces to the nations of the earth that she is doomed ere long to fall! Her proud city is to be captured; her idols are to be confounded and utterly broken to pieces.——This is real prophecy! Such are its lofty prerogatives—indefinitely high above the utmost reach of human sagacity!——Bel and Merodach are only different names for the same god—the patron god of great Babylon—the same whom Nebuchadnezzar, both in the sacred Scriptures and in profane records, continually recognizes and adores as his own god. (See Dan. 4: 8, and 3: 14.)——These heathen gods were accounted the patrons and protectors of their worshipers. Hence the fall of Babylon would be the confounding and breaking down of their god. In their view, Babylon could not fall until its god had been overpowered.——This conquering power before which Babylon falls, comes from the north. When the prophet wrote, this power also, even more than that of Babylon, was undeveloped. No eye save that of God could see its future greatness.

4. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God.

5. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten.

Thus early in the course of this magnificent prophecy appears this clear intimation that, coincident with the fall of Babylon, the Lord's people would earnestly seek their God, asking the way to Zion with their faces set to go thither, and most beautifully and fitly proposing to join themselves to the Lord in a covenant sacred and perpetual, and never, like their former covenant, to be broken and forgotten. Dan. 9 is an interesting comment on this prophecy. We may suppose that Daniel was not alone in his spirit of humble confession and earnest supplication for divine mercy. There were others with him who set their faces fully toward the Zion of their fathers. The author of Ps. 137, is personally unknown to us, but plainly he expressed the feelings, not of one man alone, but of many of the waiting and hoping captives along-side the rivers of Babylon. The spirit of that psalm would readily culminate into the prompt and earnest passion for seeking God and his Zion which stands out in this prophecy with such life-like boldness and beauty.

6. My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place.

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7. All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

The figure here used—"lost sheep"—is nicely appropriate. Our divine Lord used it in the same sense: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15: 24). The habits of the sheep are so gregarious that, lost from their home and company, they are simply miserable. Hence in part the fitness of this figure. They are also distinguished for following so readily those in whom they have confidence—a fine illustration of the docility and attachment to himself of Christ's true disciples. These points are prominent here. Wicked shepherds have misled Israel, the Lord's flock, enticing them far away, and then abandoning them on unknown mountains, so that they had utterly forgotten the place of their rest. Then all who found these lost sheep, astray without home or owner, seized and devoured them, pleading in justification, "We have done no crime, for these people have sinned against their own Lord, the hope of their fathers, the God who is the *home* (habitation) of justice, and who, therefore, demands justice in his people, and visits on the guilty a righteous retribution."——These points made in this seventh verse are indeed very remarkable. They are admirably adapted to make a profound impression upon the exiles in respect to the *cause* of their national calamities and the views of their case which might well be taken by at least the more intelligent among their captors. How much those more intelligent heathen really knew about the God of Israel is an exceedingly interesting question, upon which we should be happy to know much more than lies within our reach. There are several intimations bearing on this point. (See chap. 40: 2, 3, and notes there; also chap. 2: 3, and Zech. 11: 5, and Isa. 36: 10.) Obviously they knew that the Jews had forsaken their own national God, and therefore that they had incurred his just displeasure; but precisely what their views were of the extent of his power, and whether they thought of him at all as the one only Supreme God, does not appear. Perhaps the principal aim of this reference to their views was its moral effect on the exiles themselves rather than to give us light as to the theology of the heathen.

8. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

9. For lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows *shall be* as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

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10. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD.

Without entirely dropping the figure of a "flock" ("be as the he-goats before the flock," who lead them on), the Lord exhorts his people to be in readiness to leave Babylon, for it is his purpose to bring upon her an armed host who will subdue and spoil her. Here, as in v. 3 above, the quarter whence they will come is indicated—"from the north country."

11. Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of my heritage, because ye have grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls;

12. Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations *shall be* a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.

13. Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

Throughout this prophecy the idea of retributive justice is made prominent. Because Babylon exulted proudly in her conquest of Judah, and because she forgot the Lord Almighty, and waxed fat and haughty against him (*e. g.*, Belshazzar in his wine-cups and revelry, Dan. 5: 1–4), therefore the Lord will bring on her this utter and fearful desolation.——In the last clause of v. 11, the more recent critics read, not "heifer at grass," but the threshing heifer, who, not being muzzled while treading out the corn, became fat, rude, and uncontrollable. They also approve the marginal reading of the last figure, "neighing as steeds" rather than "bellow as bulls," finding a similar usage of the original words in Jeremiah 8: 16, and 47: 3.——In v. 12, "your mother" refers to Babylon, the mother city of the nation. Even she should lose all her prestige and glory, and be utterly put to shame. The great Chaldean power, once first among nations, shall become the last ("hindermost") and lowest of them all.

14. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD.

15. Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it *is* the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

The prophet summons the enemies of Babylon to their work of assault and conquest. In v. 15, "*She gave her hand*," signifies

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that she surrenders and gives her hand in pledge of submission. Cases of a similar usage of this phrase appear (Ezek. 17: 18): "Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, *he had given his hand*," etc. Also Lam. 5: 6: "We *have given the hand* to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians to be satisfied with bread." The Hebrew of 2 Chron. 30: 8 reads: "Be not stiff-necked as your fathers were, but *give the hand* unto the Lord," etc.——It is predicted here that Babylon will surely fall. The next clause should read, not "her foundations," but "her pillars will fall." The reason is that the hour of God's retribution upon her has come.

16. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land.

The vast and rich plains in the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, were the main source of wealth to Babylon. Hence to "cut off the sower and the reaper" would effectually doom the city to famine and desolation.——The last clause assumes that Babylon, in her days of prosperity, had a large foreign population—a fact which must always be true of all great cities which are the centers of extensive commerce as well as of political power. When the fear of the oppressing sword came upon them, they naturally fled each to his own country and people. Hence the prospect of serious war would depopulate such cities with astonishing rapidity.

17. Israel *is* a scattered sheep; the lions have driven *him* away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.

18. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.

19. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.

The conception of Israel as scattered and lost sheep, driven and devoured by lions, appears here again (see v. 6–8) for the sake of connecting with it the retribution due and about to fall on her destroyers. The king of Assyria first took the ten tribes into captivity (B. C. 722) in the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel, and of Hezekiah, of Judah. (See 2 Kings 17.) Now Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ends the ruin by crushing and cranching his bones. The Lord had already punished Assyria by the utter ruin of Nineveh (B. C. 625). He here declares that he will in like manner punish Babylon. He did so by using Cyrus at the head of the Medo-Persian

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armies (B. C. 538). This would prepare the way for restoring Israel to his own land.——The term "Israel," as used here, overlooks the distinction between Israel and Judah, created by the revolt. Some from the ten tribes may have returned with the people of Judah proper, in the restoration under the decree of Cyrus. Be that as it may, the name Israel in this passage manifestly falls back to the original use of it for the whole covenant people.

20. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and *there shall be* none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

The question naturally arises whether the thought here is primarily of sanctification, or of pardon. I judge it to be of pardon, partly because the last clause assigns this as the ground or reason why the sins of Judah were not to be found, and partly because pardon is so commonly spoken of as a "taking away of sins;" "removing them" from God's sight; "covering" them from view; "causing them to be remembered no more;" "casting them into the depths of the sea." The reader may usefully examine such passages as John 1: 29; Zech. 3: 9, and 13: 1; Ps. 32: 1, and 85: 2; Jer. 31: 34, and Micah 7: 19.——"Those whom I reserve" means those whom he had spared to survive and remain. All these he would fully and freely pardon. Thus pardoned, their sins would not appear before the face of God as demanding punishment. And as justice would no longer demand *their* punishment, it would demand the punishment of their oppressors. When the Lord's people become penitent and are forgiven, the moral reason for punishing them ceases; but all the greater is the reason for punishing their oppressors. The former are now the Lord's accepted flock, taken under his special protection. Will he not therefore visit retribution upon those that devour them? The subsequent context pursues this train of thought.

21. Go up against the land of Merathaim, *even* against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee.

The words "Merathaim" and "Pekod" will not be found in ancient geographies. They are not common names of places in current use, but are names given by the prophet to the land of Chaldea and to Babylon because the words themselves express his thought. Merathaim is in the dual number, and means *double rebellion*, with reference to the facts stated vs. 17, 18; viz., that twice—once by the king of Assyria, and once by the king of Babylon—that eastern land had come down on his chosen people in the attitude of rebellion and war against God. "Pekod" means *retribution*. The verb is commonly used to express God's sending retribution on

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guilty nations, and is rendered usually to "punish" or to "visit upon," *i. e.*, to send judgments on the guilty. Because Babylon became the object of such retribution, she takes the name "Pekod."

22. A sound of battle *is* in the land, and of great destruction.

23. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!

24. I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD.

25. The LORD hath opened his armory, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this *is* the work of the Lord GOD of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.

26. Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left.

"The hammer of the whole earth," is a most expressive figure for a great military conquering power which had smitten and crushed the nations. Babylon had been—or rather, from the stand-point of time at which the prophet wrote—*was to be* "the great hammer of the nations;" but God would bring on her a signal retribution for her cruelty and pride. In v. 24, "wast taken" and "wast not aware" means taken *before* she was aware; taken by surprise, as the history (Dan. 5) shows. Profane history fully sustains this point.——The Lord calls for an utter destruction which should leave proud Babylon in heaps of ruins. So she has lain for ages.

27. Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation.

In the phrase, "Slay all her bullocks," the literal sense of "bullocks" is possible, yet can not be adopted. The figurative sense corresponds to the course of thought and to Hebrew usage. Her "bullocks" are her fat and proud warriors and her princes. (See chap. 46: 21, and Ps. 22: 12.) Their day of retribution has fully come.

28. The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.

In this prophecy two classes of people are spoken of as going out from Babylon, viz. (1), the Jewish exiles (*e. g.*, chap. 50: 8,

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and 51: 6, 45), and (2) her other foreign population (chap. 50: 16, etc.) In this verse the former class are thought of and are exhorted to proclaim in Zion, whither they are soon to go, the vengeance which the Lord has taken on Babylon for her destruction of his temple.

29. Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work: according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

30. Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD.

31. Behold, I *am* against thee, *O thou* most proud, saith the Lord GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time *that* I will visit thee.

32. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

This description, "archers" and "bowmen," applies well to the Medes and Persians.——The Lord takes special pains to show that this curse on Babylon is for her pride and for her oppressive cruelty. All the nations of the world through all time ought to know and to heed this.

33. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The children of Israel and the children of Judah *were* oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.

34. Their Redeemer *is* strong; The LORD of hosts *is* his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

"Redeemer" is here used in its original, legitimate sense—one who rescues from bondage; who buys off or recovers by force the enslaved and oppressed. In this sense the Lord of hosts proves himself the Redeemer of his captive people. His interposition would give rest to his own land and to his people, restored and dwelling there, while it would equally give disquiet to the people of Babylon.

35. A sword *is* upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise *men*.

36. A sword *is* upon the liars; and they shall dote: a

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sword *is* upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed.

37. A sword *is* upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that *are* in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword *is* upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.

In v. 36 the word for "liars" associates the idea of pride—proud boasting men, perhaps with reference here to conjurers, false prophets, who pretend to superhuman knowledge, but know nothing.—— "They shall *dote*"—be senseless, under-witted. By reason of the invading sword their folly and the utter falsity of their pretensions to superior knowledge will become signally apparent.

38. A drought *is* upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it *is* the land of graven images, and they are mad upon *their* idols.

In the phrase, "mad upon their idols," the original words suggest ideas which heighten the beauty and force of the passage. The word for *idol* means properly *terror*, an object of *fear*, with reference to the superstitious fear and dread with which the Chaldeans regarded their idols. The verb rendered "mad" means, in its simple form, to shine; then in its derived forms, to make a shine or show; to show off and to be proud of; then to do this to the extent of being silly, ridiculous, senseless, as here. In their pride and folly, they make themselves supremely ridiculous by giving their homage and worship to those senseless, powerless gods whom they honor because they are so much afraid of them.

39. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell *there*, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

40. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor *cities* thereof, saith the LORD; *so* shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

The same things in nearly the same words are in Isaiah's prophecy of the fall of Babylon (chap. 13: 19–22); also in his prophecy of the ruin of Idumea (chap. 34: 13–15). The central ideas are, utter depopulation and occupation by wild animals.——The word rendered "wild beasts of the islands" is thought by the best modern critics to mean the jackals, the *howlers*, an animal that makes night hideous with his yells. His characteristics place him between the fox and the wolf.——A desolation like that of Sodom and Gomorrah is the extreme of ruin, beyond which all figures and comparisons fail us.

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41. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

42. They shall hold the bow and the lance: they *are* cruel, and will not show mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, *every one* put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon.

The prophet reiterates the fact that her enemies come from the north and are mighty with the bow; and adds that they are an allied host, composed of various nations. All this prophecy is wonderfully true to history.

43. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, *and* pangs as of a woman in travail.

The account of Belshazzar (Dan. 5) and the records of profane history conspire to fulfill every word of this prophecy. Belshazzar was in dismay and anguish; his night of revelry became his night of doom.

44. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who *is* a chosen *man, that* I may appoint over her? for who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me?

45. Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make *their* habitation desolate with them.

These verses appear in the prophecy against Edom (49: 19, 20). See notes there.

46. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

The fall of Babylon shook the whole earth; the cry of it went forth among all the nations. No nation could be unaffected by this event. She was the great central power in the whole eastern world. Hence, the shock of her fall was felt in every land like the shock of an earthquake.

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CHAPTER LI.

1. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;
2. And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.
3. Against *him that* bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against *him that* lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host.
4. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and *they that are* thrust through in her streets.

The subject of the previous chapter is continued and closed in this. These four verses are the very words of the Lord.——The last clause of v. 1 would be more simple if read, "I will raise up against those that dwell in the midst of my adversaries," etc., *i. e.*, against the people of Babylon.——A "destroying wind" is a very significant figure with the orientals where the fierce and terrible sirocco carries death in its blast.

5. For Israel *hath* not *been* forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.
6. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this *is* the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense.

The ensuing verses (5–13) are the words of the prophet.——In v. 5, "forsaken" means widowed, bereaved of her natural protectors and friends.——In the phrase, "Though their land," etc., the word "*though*" misleads the reader to think the land referred to is that of Israel. The original word can scarcely mean "*though*." It should be "*for*," assigning one reason why the Lord interposes for the deliverance of his people. "*Their land*" is that of Babylon, and the reason therefore is the great pride and guilt of that city.——In v. 6 the exhortation to flee out of Babylon is intended specially for the Jews.

7. Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

This golden wine-cup must be essentially the same as "the wine-

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cup of this fury" (chap. 25: 15). The Lord had used her as his scourge upon many nations. This verse seems naturally to mean that her influence had served to intoxicate the nations with the spirit of national pride, idolatry, and oppression, and thus had made them ripe for destruction. When they had become thus ripe for ruin, God made Babylon the minister of his vengeance also, to pass round to their lips the wine-cup of his retribution.

8. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

9. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up *even* to the skies.

"Take balm," etc., addresses any friends she might have—naturally her allies, and more specifically the foreign population residing there. The latter manifestly make the answer in v. 9.—— Her case is hopeless; let us escape for our lives, and leave her to her doom.——In the last clause of v. 9, "judgment" may mean either her *calamities* sent upon her of God in retribution, or the *sins* because of which they were sent; more often the former; yet perhaps here primarily the latter. Her sins are so great, that nothing can be done to save her. Gesenius favors this sense, and cites Ezek. 7: 23 to support it.——In the Hebrew idiom, any thing very great is said to "reach up to heaven," *e. g.*, 2 Chron. 28: 9, "Ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up to heaven;" and Gen. 11: 4 "A tower whose top may reach heaven;" Dan. 4: 22, "For thy iniquity reacheth to heaven." So also Ps. 35: 5, and 108: 4.

10. The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

The prophet speaks in the name of the Jews. "The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness" in the sense of pleading and avenging our cause and testifying his displeasure against our enemies and captors. Come and let us praise him in our holy temple and city, and speak of his deliverances there.

11. Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device *is* against Babylon, to destroy it; because it *is* the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

12. Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.

13. O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant

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in treasures, thine end is come, *and* the measure of thy covetousness.

Verses 11, 12, address their call to the enemies of Babylon.—— In the clause rendered "Gather the shields," the Hebrew verb means primarily to *fill*. Gesenius supposes it means here, Fill the shields with the soldier's own body, *i. e.*, put them on; while Maurer suggests the sense, "Fill them with oil;" anoint them as a preparation for service, urging that this is in harmony with the preceding clause, "Polish the arrows," and corresponds with Isaiah 21: 5, "Anoint the shields."——This ruin of Babylon is God's retribution for her sins especially against his temple.——V. 12 intimates that ambushes would be among the agencies of this victory, in which the prophecy and the history are at one. Cyrus took the city by a species of grand ambushment, turning the river elsewhere and marching his army into the city through its dry channel.——V. 13 addresses Babylon as "dwelling upon many waters," with reference to her position on the great Euphrates, out of which she took large supplies of water for irrigation by canals, and thus literally "sat upon many waters."——"The measure of her covetousness had come" in the sense that God now set a *limit* to her greed and grasp after unrighteous gain, shown in the exaction of unpaid labor from her hosts of captives.

14. The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, *saying*, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.

15. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

16. When he uttereth *his* voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

17. Every man is brutish by *his* knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them.

18. They *are* vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

19. The Portion of Jacob *is* not like them; for he *is* the former of all things: and *Israel is* the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts *is* his name.

The prophet having stated the solemn affirmation of the Lord Jehovah that he will fill Babylon with armed foes, and they shall raise the shout of victory within her streets and palaces, proceeds to confirm it by descanting upon the power and majesty of the

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great God as contrasted with the utter powerlessness of all the idols of the heathen. The entire passage vs. 15–19 appears in chap. 10: 12–16, where its purpose is to guard the captive Jews against being ensnared into idol-worship. The quotation is eminently in place here. See the notes there.

20. Thou *art* my battle-ax, *and* weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;

21. And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;

22. With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid;

23. I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers.

24. And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

These verses seem to be addressed to Israel throughout. If so, their ultimate sense must be, not that the Lord used them as the immediate executioners of his retribution on guilty nations, but that *for their sakes*, because they were his people and bare his name, he would bring retribution on their enemies. This idea of retribution on Babylon for the evil they had brought on Zion before the very eyes of his people, stands out prominently in v. 24, and really underlies the whole passage.

25. Behold, I *am* against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.

26. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate forever, saith the LORD.

Babylon, as a great sovereignty, had been an active volcano, belching forth lava to desolate other nations. The Lord would put forth his hand and roll her down as an avalanche is rolled down from the crest of the Alps, and would let her burn out. This blending of the figures of the volcano and the avalanche may not conform to the nicest rules of rhetoric, but none can say the

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conceptions are not grand, and their significance both clear and strong.——That from her vast structures not a stone should be taken for the building of other cities, is a very extraordinary prophecy, since it quite reverses the common law. Yet this prophecy became true history. In fact, large building stones *were never there.* Her immense structures were built of brick, either sun-dried or kiln-burnt. Hence the great mass of these materials lie to this day more or less decomposed in the mountains of rubbish which mark the site of that once magnificent city.——But how came a prophet in Palestine to know that of the great structures of Babylon, most of them as yet unbuilt, men should take away no corner or foundation-stone when they should lie in ruins? How else can such minute and improbable, yet truthful, predictions be accounted for except as inspired of God?

27. Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars.

28. Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion.

Ararat is the name of a mountain, and also of a province, in Central Armenia.—the mountain being that on which the ark rested after the flood. The name *Ararat* is Sanskrit, meaning "the holy land," a name probably due to the traditions of Noah's ark.——"Minni" was a province adjacent; Ashchenaz lay still further north. These nations, having been previously conquered by Cyrus, furnished soldiers for the Medo-Persian armies in their invasion of Chaldea and siege of Babylon.——Their horses are like the rough caterpillar in the sense of bristling with the glittering war-weapons of their riders, of terrible aspect to the timid Chaldeans.

29. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.

30. The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in *their* holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwelling-places; her bars are broken.

In the two last clauses of v. 30, it is not the Chaldeans, but their enemies who have "burned her dwelling-places and broken her bars."

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31. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at *one* end,

32. And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.

The word rendered "post" means a *courier*, a runner. It need not surprise us that in this vast city, whose outer wall, according to Herodotus, was sixty miles in circumference, one end might be taken by the enemy some time before the other end would hear the tidings. These runners report to the king that the gates opening from the city to the river which ran through its center, are seized by the enemy; that the reeds (palisades) with which the banks were fortified to prevent an enemy from gaining access to the city through the river-bed, were burned with fire, and that the Chaldean soldiers were panic-smitten.——No history could describe the progressive steps of this assault and capture with more precision than this prophecy written by Jeremiah before these vast walls of Babylon were even built. For all reliable history testifies that Nebuchadnezzar was *the* great builder of Babylon; that nearly all of its vast structures, including the city walls and the defences along the river bank, were either built or rebuilt by him. Yet the prophet saw things that were not as though they were, and so put on record this wonderfully minute account of their capture and ruin.

33. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon *is* like a threshing-floor, *it is* time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

34. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

35. The violence done to me and to my flesh *be* upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, My blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.

The figures of the threshing-floor and of the harvest are common in the Hebrew poets to indicate the destruction of cities and the slaughter of their people. (Isa. 21: 10 and 17: 5; Amos 1: 3; Mic. 4: 13; Joel 3: 13; and Rev. 14: 15, 18.) The ancient threshing instrument was a heavy roller, ridged with iron, drawn by animals, and made to crush both the straw and the grain with great force. Hence it vividly represented the instruments of Jehovah's vengeance on guilty nations.——In vs. 34 and 35, Judah and Jerusalem speak, recognizing the fall of Babylon as

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God's righteous retribution for her violence against the holy city and people. This is one of the most prominent thoughts in this entire prophecy against Babylon, the object being to assure the exiles that the Lord remembered and would yet avenge them; would break down Babylon and release them to return to their own land.

36. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

37. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant.

38. They shall roar together like lions; they shall yell as lions' whelps.

39. In their heat, I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.

40. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he-goats.

"Her sea" means her waters, those of the Euphrates and its vast artificial lakes and canals, constructed with immense labor to retain and duly distribute the waters of the river for irrigation and for other uses.——V. 39 seems to mean that while the princes and the elite of Babylon were reveling in their gorgeous festive halls, heated with wine, and exulting over the captured vessels of Jehovah's temple, God himself would help to make their feasts, giving them to drink of the wine-cup of his fury in the sense so vividly expressed Jer. 25: 15–36. This dreadful wine-cup, which both begets infatuation and forebodes destruction, brought upon the drunken princes of Babylon a long sleep, from which they never waked. Hosts of them, like Belshazzar, on that fatal night slept their last sleep!

41. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

See the criticisms on the word "Sheshach" in the notes on chap. 25: 26. The explanation there approved which assumes its original significance to be a *thicket*, and its derived sense here to be a *dense mass* of buildings and people, has some support in the parallel clause, "The praise of the whole earth." It is also very plain that there is no enigma in the name "*Sheshach*"—no attempt to conceal the true idea, since Babylon, her well-known name, is spoken in the same breath.

42. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof.

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43. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth *any* son of man pass thereby.

44. And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him; yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

The vast plains around Babylon were flooded by the Euphrates in its great freshets, presenting the appearance of an inland sea. Compare vs. 13, 36. To regulate these inundations, Nebuchadnezzar, with immense labor, constructed a vast reservoir, an inland lake, and then cut canals from this lake to irrigate the country when water was needed. But when the huge brick structures of Babylon became heaps of ruins, these canals and even the river itself were blocked up, and the whole plain was flooded during large portions of the year. Consequently, it passed from a state of most luxuriant fertility to one of utter barrenness, a vast quagmire, a continent of mud, marsh, bog, miasm, desolation! Thus was this wonderfully minute, and to human view improbable prophecy, literally fulfilled.——Bel, the chief and patron god of Babylon, is thought of as having taken into his stomach the vast amount of treasures brought into his temple; but in righteous judgment, the Great God compels him to disgorge it! The nations shall no more "*flow together*," making their long pilgrimages with votive offerings to his shrine.——The word rendered "flow together," is the same which represents the confluence of the nations to Jehovah's temple "in the latter days," (*e. g.*, Isaiah 2: 2, Mic. 4: 1, Jer. 31: 12.)——That the walls of Babylon should fall, was a great event which such a prophecy could not omit. Herodotus, an eye-witness, describes this double wall, an outer and an inner; the outer, three hundred and thirty-seven and a half feet high; eighty-five feet thick; with *one hundred* gates of brass. It was the wonder of the age; indeed, of the world. Yet, under the mighty hand of God, how easily it was made to fall!

45. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

46. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumor that shall be heard in the land; a rumor shall both come *one* year, and after that in *another* year *shall come* a rumor, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

47. Therefore behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

V. 46 presupposes that the Lord will give his people timely

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warning when to flee from Babylon. Yet lest, if the alarm should be delayed to the last moment and then come suddenly, their panic would be a serious evil, the Lord will provide a gradual series of gentler warnings and thus afford them ample time for an easy escape. The case is quite analogous to the notice given by our Lord to his disciples to flee from Jerusalem before its destruction by the Romans.

48. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that *is* therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD.

All heaven and earth exult over the fall of Babylon. So cruel had been her sway and so just is her fearful doom, that this retribution is grateful to all good beings in the universe. The fact of deserved retribution brings a sense of relief and of exquisite joy, renewing our trust in a righteous God and refreshing our hearts with the assurance that the myriads of his creatures shall have peace and bliss under his righteous and beneficent reign.——All the richer was this exultation over her fall because the everlasting memorials of it in her mountain piles of ruins, half covered by the sea, were God's index-finger pointing to her sin! With horribly cruel oppression, she had driven whole armies of her war-captives to their tasks in digging canals, making brick, and building city walls and kings' palaces. Now the walls, thrown down or falling, fill up the canals and witness to all ages of God's hand in the fall of proud and cruel Babylon.——See this verse developed remarkably in Rev. 18: 20 and 19. Also in Isaiah 44: 23, and 49: 13.

49. As Babylon *hath caused* the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.

50. Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

There being no Hebrew verb expressed, corresponding to "*hath caused*," the Hebrew idiom requires us to supply the verb *to be*, thus: as Babylon *has been for* the fall of the slain of Israel, etc., *i. e.*, has devoted herself successfully to their destruction.——The prophet had repeatedly exhorted the exiles to flee out of Babylon. Here he adds, When once out of her, make no halt; fix not your abode there; but remember the Lord your God from afar, and let Jerusalem come into your mind to kindle your tender affection for her and awaken earnest longings to return thither.

51. We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces; for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD'S house.

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This is what the exiles are supposed to say when exhorted to think of their own Jerusalem. "It is sad" (say they) "to think of her; we remember how the heathen reproached us, and how they laid unclean hands upon the most holy things of the house of our God."

52. Wherefore behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan.

Naturally this allusion to the insults offered by the heathen to the temple of God, arouses his indignation, and he declares that the time shall come when he will bring retribution upon her graven images—as if to show that the God of Israel is mightier far than the gods of Babylon.

53. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, *yet* from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.

There was the utmost fitness in this thought. Though Babylon could carry her walls, not merely to the height of 337 feet, but up to heaven itself, and make her lofty heights ever so strong, yet how easily could the Lord find spoilers to lay her low and desolate.

54. A sound of a cry *cometh* from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans:

55. Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered:

56. Because the spoiler is come upon her, *even* upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of recompenses shall surely requite.

Among numerous other indications of the ruin of Babylon, we have here the fearful outcry of terror at her fall, coupled also with the crash and the roar when her lofty towers and walls are seen in vision to fall to the ground. In the last clause of v. 55, "Her waves that roar like great waters," are probably her enemies rushing upon her with the shout of victory, and in point of the ruin they bring, resembling a mighty inundation. The next clauses show that the mind of the writer is on the invading hosts of spoilers.

57. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise *men*, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name *is* The LORD of hosts.

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See v. 39 and notes there. Here this fearful retribution is forcibly ascribed to the great "King of nations, whose name is Jehovah of hosts." It was as the God of nations, governing them in righteousness and bringing on them deserved retribution, that he had brought this judgment on Babylon.

58. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labor in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

This closing verse of this elaborate prophetic description sums up the most vital facts.——The broad walls of Babylon, though eighty-five feet broad, and built apparently for immortality, shall be utterly broken. The original implies that their foundations shall be laid naked, the very ground on which they stood being made bare. Her hundred lofty gates shall be burned with fire. The armies of captives whose labor she employed for years in their erection, will appear to have spent their strength and toil in vain, working and building only for the fire to destroy. And they shall be utterly exhausted, past all power to recuperate their strength. This is the sense of "being weary." Hab. 2: 13 treats of the same subject, and was perhaps in the mind of Jeremiah.——Referring to the wonderful structures of this great city, and the utter ruin that came over them so signally, George Rawlinson writes: "The most remarkable fact connected with the magnificence of Babylon, is the poorness of the materials with which such wonderful results were produced. The whole country being alluvial, was entirely destitute of stone, and even wood was scarce and of bad quality, being yielded only by the palm-groves which fringe the course of the canals. In default of these (the ordinary materials for building) recourse was had to the soil of the country, in many parts an excellent clay; and with bricks made from this, either sun-dried or baked, the vast structures were raised, which, when they stood in their integrity, provoked comparison with the pyramids of Egypt, and which, even in their decay, excite the astonishment of travelers."——Few events of ancient history have been more celebrated or better known than those which embody the primary fulfillment of these prophecies against Babylon—its famous conquest by Cyrus at the head of the allied armies of Media and Persia. Herodotus and Xenophon, both deservedly among the highest authorities in Grecian history, have lent their genius to embellish and their great names to confirm the essential facts in that wonderful revolution which overthrew the Chaldean empire and planted the Medo-Persian upon its ruins.——One of the most striking points in this prophecy is its minuteness of detail. The reader who shall carefully group together all the minute and special points of this prophecy, will find himself already possessed with the great facts of that wonderful history. Let him note that Babylon is here a great city of vast extent; of

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lofty and broad walls; of a large foreign population, who scattered and fled each to his own country; that her kings and princes were reveling in a drunken debauch on that fatal night; that her armies were panic-smitten and forbore to fight; that tidings first came to the king that his city was taken at one end; that "the passages" from the city to the river were seized by the enemy, and the palisades that fortified those points were burned; that her broad walls were leveled to the ground; that a fearful ruin ultimately swept over her, and left nothing but emptiness and desolation; that the sea covered her; and, in another line of facts, that her destroyers came from the north; that the Medes were prominent among them; that there were many other great nations combined with them in this final conflict; that they were armed with the bow, etc.—these are a portion of the definite points made in this prophecy, all which are definitely confirmed by historians who never read Jeremiah, and who, if they had, could have no interest in making out a fulfillment of his prophecies. Yet when Jeremiah wrote, *the* Babylon of the great Chaldean dynasty was yet in great measure to be made. Its immensely broad and lofty walls were yet to be built. Cyrus was yet unborn. The great Median power was scarcely known. The divine providences which brought up those northern kingdoms, developed their strength and effected their combination, were yet to be unfolded. What mortal eye could pierce into that darkness of yet unmade history? What human line could fathom those depths of the distant future?——Verily this cometh only of the wisdom of Him who "calleth the things that are not as though they were," and who can read to mortals their yet unmade history, because it is his province to shape the making of all human history.

59. The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And *this* Seraiah *was* a quiet prince.

60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, *even* all these words that are written against Babylon.

61. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words;

62. Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate forever.

63. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, *that* thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:

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64. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far *are* the words of Jeremiah.

This passage stands here as a sequel to the prophecy against Babylon comprised in chap. 50 and 51: 1–58, showing especially that the prophet, having written it, committed it to Seraiah to carry to Babylon—he being one of the attendants of king Zedekiah in his journey to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. Seraiah was directed, on arriving at Babylon, to read this prophecy; then to repeat certain words here recited; and, finally, to bind a stone to this roll and sink it in the Euphrates, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil which I will bring upon her; and they shall be weary," *i. e.*, exhausted so as never to regain their national vigor and vitality.——This Seraiah was not the one who bears this name in chap. 36: 26, nor the other who bears this name in chap. 40: 8, as is shown by the name of his father, Neriah. But he was a brother of Baruch, and therefore of a family who were warm and fast friends of the prophet. Seraiah manifestly held a place of responsible trust under Zedekiah. The clause rendered in our Bible "Seraiah was a quiet prince," does not mean merely that he was a man of quiet habits or disposition; but probably that he was captain of the caravan on this journey, having the responsibility of directing the place of their nightly encampments and rest. The original is literally, "The prince or leader of the *rests*," the haltings for rest on their journey. The man who bore this responsibility probably had the general charge of the caravan.

The genuineness of this passage (vs. 59–64) is strenuously denied by Rosenmüller and by some other German critics. He maintains it to be incredible that Jeremiah should send such a prophecy to Babylon at a time when it was of the utmost consequence to conciliate and preserve the good-will of the Chaldeans, and especially that he should send it in company with the Jewish king who went there for this special purpose; and further, that no man in his senses would destroy the permanent record of such a prophecy and leave it existing only in the memory of those who had heard it once read, when its value depended chiefly on its being actually in the hands of men both before and after the events it purported to predict should transpire. He is confident therefore that it was subjoined by some compiler at a later day, his object being to excite a higher admiration for this prophecy by falsely dating it before its actual production.——In my view, the grounds on which these critics deny the genuineness of this passage are mainly misconceptions of the case. For (1.) It is not affirmed or even intimated that this prophecy was read *to the Chaldeans*, or was intended to be brought to their knowledge, certainly *at that time*. The current strain of the prophecy shows that it was designed specially for the Jewish exiles. It contained numerous ex-

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hortations *to them* personally, adapted to prevent them from becoming firmly settled there; to assure them, that in due time Babylon would be overthrown, and that her fall would bring their release and be the signal for their return to their native land; also, to assure them of God's continued remembrance of their nation and of his righteous retribution on Babylon for her cruel oppression of their people, and for her destruction of their temple. These points and such as these show plainly why this prophecy was sent to Babylon. It might at some future period have been brought to the knowledge of the Chaldeans for their moral benefit. There is nothing in this account to show that Seraiah read it to them at this time. (2.) It is simply an assumption to suppose that the only copy of this prophecy was sunk into the Euphrates, so that no record of it remained for the exiles. For if so, whence came the copy which has come down to us?——There was an object in sinking one copy in the Euphrates. The symbolic act would naturally make a strong impression of the great truth which it taught. But inasmuch as the prophecy was intended for the use of the exiles not of that generation alone, but of the next no less, and onward at least till the fulfillment of these predictions and the great restoration, and even onward through all coming time, nothing forbids us and all these considerations require us to suppose that Seraiah retained a copy for these purposes.——With these views of the case, the objections to its genuineness disappear, and ample reasons are apparent for all the transactions here stated. ——The casting of this stone into the Euphrates stands among the symbols of the Apocalypse (chap. 18: 21). "A mighty angel took up a stone like a great mill-stone and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city, Babylon, be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." The striking significance and force of this symbol stand out boldly in this use of it by the revelator John. He has borrowed largely from this prophecy of Babylon to fill out the description of *his* Babylon.—— The closing words of the chapter—"Thus far are the words of Jeremiah"—may be taken either as referring to this special portion, chap. 50 and 51; or to all the chapters of this book up to this point. The choice between these two views is important in its bearings upon the authorship of chap. 52, since in the former case this last chapter might be written by Jeremiah, but not in the latter.——I incline to the latter view, viz., that the statement refers to all that precedes, and therefore was designed to show that this last chapter is not from his hand. On the former supposition there seems to be no satisfactory reason for the statement.

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CHAPTER LII.

I see no serious objection to the supposition that this chapter was placed here by some compiler of Jeremiah's prophecies—perhaps, and even probably, Ezra. The reasons in favor of this view are: the statement with which the previous chapter closes, to the effect that, *so far*, Jeremiah was the author, but (as is implied) no farther; also the fact that nearly the whole of this chapter may have been copied almost verbatim from 2 Kings 24: 18–20, and 25: 1–21, 27–30—*i. e.*, all this chapter except vs. 28–30. These three verses are precisely such as we might expect Ezra to add. ——It is by no means unnatural that a judicious compiler should deem it important to append to such a book of prophecies a succinct historical sketch of the fall of Jerusalem, the disposal made of the captives, and the ultimate fortunes of their surviving king Jehoiachin. If Jeremiah had written this chapter, there is no reason apparent why it should not have come in its natural order with chap. 39, where, in vs. 1–10, he gives his account of the capture of the city. If these views are correct, this chapter should appropriately have been styled, not *Jeremiah*, chap. 52, but "*A supplement to Jeremiah by the compiler.*"

1. Zedekiah *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

2. And he did *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

3. For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4. And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

5. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

6. And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

7. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the

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king's garden; (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

8. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

9. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him.

10. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.

11. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

See notes on 39: 1–7. This account is somewhat more full than that given by Jeremiah in chap. 39. The allusion to the Lord's anger as the cause of this judgment, Jeremiah omits in his historic sketch, doubtless for the reason that he had so often declared it in his prophecies.——We also learn here *where* king Zedekiah was overtaken, and that he was kept in prison at Babylon till his death.

12. Now in the fifth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, which *was* the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, *which* served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem,

13. And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great *men*, burned he with fire:

14. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that *were* with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about.

This account of the destruction of the city by fire is somewhat more minute than that given by Jeremiah (39: 8). The Chaldeans manifestly meant to make the destruction of the valuable buildings and of the city walls complete, so as to leave nothing of any value standing.——Comparing v. 12 with 2 Kings 25: 8, we have a discrepancy of three days—the former naming the tenth day, and the latter the seventh. It has been suggested that the latter gives the day Nebuchadnezzar started from Riblah; the former, the day he arrived at Jerusalem.

15. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive *certain* of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that

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fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude.

16. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left *certain* of the poor of the land for vine-dressers and for husbandmen.

In disposing of the still surviving population, the Chaldean policy seems to have been to take away all the princes and nobles, and all men of any considerable wealth or social position; all who had gone over to them during the war and the siege; and a portion of the poor. But a few of the poor, said by Jeremiah (39: 10) to be those who "had nothing," they "left for vine-dressers and husbandmen." It seems probable that they were left, not so much for the sake of keeping up the cultivation of the vineyards and of the soil, as because it would not pay to take them to Babylon as captives, and they could get a subsistence in Judea.

17. Also the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brazen sea that *was* in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.

18. The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

19. And the basins, and the fire-pans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; *that* which *was* of gold *in* gold, and *that* which *was* of silver *in* silver, took the captain of the guard away.

20. The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brazen bulls that *were* under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

21. And *concerning* the pillars, the height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof *was* four fingers: *it was* hollow.

22. And a chapiter of brass *was* upon it: and the height of one chapiter *was* five cubits, with net-work and pomegranates upon the chapiters round about, all *of* brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates *were* like unto these.

23. And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; *and* all the pomegranates upon the net-work *were* a hundred round about.

The captors were careful to take from the temple every thing

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made of the precious metals, gold, silver, or brass. The Chaldeans did not find the temple in these respects as Solomon left it, for it had been plundered of its treasures at least once, *i. e.*, by Shishak, king of Egypt (1 Kings 14: 25–28, and 2 Chron. 12: 9, 10). He took away not only its stores of precious treasure, but its shields of solid gold, in place of which Rehoboam substituted shields of brass.——This record of the pillaging of the temple by the Chaldeans had a deep and painful interest to the pious Jews, whose hearts cherished all the sacred things of their temple with the tenderest love and reverence. Moreover, those vessels, sacrilegiously torn away, became historic. They were kept in Babylon during the whole period of the captivity; came to view in the revelry of the impious Belshazzar, whose profanation of them in his pride and wine aroused the wrath of God and sealed his doom; and, finally, those of chief value (if not all) were brought forth by Cyrus, put into the hands of the exiles, and carefully restored to their place in the second temple. (See Ezra 1: 7–11.) Hence the record deserves a place here, although its details may not possess any special interest to readers in the present age.

24. And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

25. He took also out of the city a eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and three-score men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city.

26. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah.

27. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land.

This is the sad record of those priests, princes, and chief men who suffered death. We have reason to suppose that most, if not all of them, were deeply implicated in the fearful guilt of the nation's apostasy from God.——Riblah was the head-quarters of the Chaldean king. At this time he was there, and not at Jerusalem.

28. This *is* the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty:

29. In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons:

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30. In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons *were* four thousand and six hundred.

By this account, captives were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon at three different periods. There was still a fourth, not named here, viz., in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and first year of Nebuchadnezzar, or, rather, just before he ascended his throne. (See 2 Kings 24: 1–4, and 2 Chron. 36: 5–7, and Dan. 1: 1–5.)——The first-named in this list, viz., in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, was at the close of the three months' reign of Jehoiachin, after the death of his father Jehoiakim, who reigned eleven years—*i. e.*, unto the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar. (See 2 Kings 24: 10–16, and Jer. 24: 1, and 29: 1, 2.)——The second in this list, said here to have been in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, occurred at the final capture and destruction of Jerusalem, and is put in his nineteenth year in v. 12. These two accounts are manifestly independent, and may both be very nearly accurate. The time may have been near the point where his eighteenth year closed and his nineteenth began.——The third in this list is not noticed elsewhere, but without doubt took place after the murder of Gedaliah, and very probably was suggested by the unsettled state of things in Judea. Perhaps it was in connection with the invasion of Egypt by the Chaldean king. (See chap 41: and 44: 30 and 46: 25, 26.)

31. And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth *day* of the month, *that* Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the *first* year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison,

32. And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that *were* with him in Babylon,

33. And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life.

34. And *for* his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

Essentially, this passage occurs at the close of the second book of Kings (chap. 25: 27–30). Jehoiachin was the lineal heir to the Jewish throne. While Nebuchadnezzar lived, he was kept in prison as a prudential measure to forestall an uprising of the exiles. At his death Evil-merodach, his son and successor, immediately released the long-imprisoned Jewish king.——"To lift

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up the head" of one in prison is a somewhat ambiguous phrase, as appears in the use of it Gen. 40: 13, 19, 22, where, in the case of the chief butler, it was used in the good sense of restoring him to favor and position; but in the case of the baker, in the bad sense of lifting him up *by his head.* Here it has the good sense. ——It is doubtful whether either this good fortune or his life continued long, since his patron-king reigned but two years. The canon of Ptolemy, Abydenus, and Berosus all concur in this date for his reign. He was murdered by Neriglissor, a Babylonian noble, who was his sister's husband. The murderer immediately ascended the throne. An old Jewish tradition runs that Evil-merodach was thrown by his stern father into prison; there fell into the society of the imprisoned Jewish king, and formed a personal attachment, of which this royal favor was one of the fruits.

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LAMENTATIONS.

AMONG all the orientals, poetry and music lend their aid to the expression of grief. The Hebrews give a liberal space in their literature to elegiac song in the form of plaintive elegies in commemoration of the virtues of the dead, and in sad recollection of great calamities. The reader will at once recall the elegies of David upon the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1: 17–27); of Abner (2 Sam. 3: 33, 34), and of Absalom (2 Sam. 18: 33). Jeremiah prepared a similar elegy on the death of Josiah (2 Chron. 35: 25, 26). See remarks on the Hebrew customs of mourning in notes on Jer. 9: 17–20.——In the same strain, though more extended, are these "lamentations" over the fall of Jerusalem, the defeat of her armies, the murder of her priests and princes, the fearful slaughter of her young men and maidens, and the utter desolation of her holy temple. The third chapter is chiefly occupied with the prophet's own personal trials and sorrows.——The whole is in Hebrew poetry. The first four chapters are *acrostic*. In chapters 1, 2, and 4 the successive verses begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, twenty-two in number; while chapter 3 is composed in triplets of verses, each verse in the first triplet beginning with the first letter of the alphabet, and each verse of the second with the second letter, etc. This artificial arrangement would aid the memory, and may have been also a matter of literary taste.——In their moral tone, these "lamentations" naturally partake somewhat deeply of the general character of such compositions among the Jews of that age. They are thoroughly elegiac. It follows almost or quite of necessity, that they contemplate the great subjects of public grief *as seen upon their human side*, and not merely as they would appear when considered in the light of a moral discipline sent of God, or in the light of that fearful apostasy from God which called for a retribution so signal as this. Yet coming from the hand of such a prophet as Jeremiah, we might naturally expect occasional allusions to the moral causes of these calamities—some recognitions of the anger of a just God, and some confessions of national sin. Such, in fact, we find. If we ask, Why is there no more confession of sin, and why no more of those views of their case which are taken from the side toward God? the answer may per-

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haps be found in the general laws of such elegiac compositions, and in the consideration that Jeremiah wrote for the people to sing and chant in their sacred music, and therefore might not think it wise to deviate very far from the established style of such compositions. It is safe to presume that, as a conscientious and thoroughly good man, he judged as wisely as he could how much of what was properly elegiac, and how much of moral application, of confession, and of prayer for mercy might best be introduced in this plaintive song.——In this view of the prophet's plan and purpose, let us not forget that the Divine Spirit guided his thought and his pen. That he was an inspired prophet admits of no question. There is nothing in this Book of Lamentations to militate against its inspiration. It had a noble moral purpose. It availed itself most wisely of a current usage in regard to public lamentations in order to give direction to the feeling of public grief, and so to turn to good account the chastened sensibility of a deeply stricken people.——The subject precludes all special messages from the Lord, whether of a prophetic or hortatory character. It would be out of place to look for them here. The phrase so oft recurring in the other book of Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts," does not occur in all this book. The only passage that seems in any wise prophetic is chap. 4: 21, 22, which gives an outlook upon the future doom of Edom and the termination of calamity on Zion.——In reference to the points above discussed, it should be distinctly noted that the third chapter differs widely in its general scope from all the others. It is thoroughly personal to the prophet, giving his own experiences, and not those of the people. There was good reason for his reciting thus his own personal trials and griefs. It was adapted to secure for him the sympathy of at least the more considerate among the people, and would help them to appreciate his character and his work.——We have reason to be thankful for this chapter. All the other chapters were prepared for the use of the people, and were designed to represent their actual feelings of grief and sorrow, as also to lead them on to a proper recognition of the hand of the Lord, and into a spirit of due confession of sin and prayer for pardon.——It is clear that this elegy was written after the fall of the city and the destruction of the temple. But whether written specially for the exiles in Chaldea, or specially for those in Egypt, or for both indiscriminately, the book affords no decisive data to show. Yet inasmuch as the remnant that went into Egypt were mostly cut off by the judgments of God, while those who went to Chaldea multiplied and ultimately furnished the returning pilgrims who replanted Judea and rebuilt Jerusalem, it can not well be doubted that this book was sent to them, and by them preserved with the other sacred books. Jeremiah understood very well that the hope of the future Zion lay in that party and not in the Egyptian, and hence would have a special reason for whatever effort he could make for their moral culture.

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CHAPTER I.

1. How doth the city sit solitary, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become as a widow! she *that was* great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!

It was truly sad to stand as Jeremiah did upon the ruins of this great and beautiful city, once thronged with people, once great and honored among the nations—now like a widow in her weeds of mourning, or as one doomed to tribute under some foreign yoke.

2. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears *are* on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her:* all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

3. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

Beautifully personifying Jerusalem as a lone and desolate female, the prophet sees her weeping sorely through the live-long night, her cheeks furrowed with tears.——By "her lovers" are meant those foreign nations, Egypt and Chaldea, with whom she had been in alliance.——"Gone into captivity *because* of affliction and because of great servitude" seem to assign the moral reasons for her fall. If so, the clew is doubtless found in Jer. 34.——In the last clause of v. 3, "between the straits" is precisely "in the midst of her straitness"—the figure being that of a hunter who has driven his game into close quarters where it can not escape.

4. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness.

5. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

"The ways of Zion" are the highways of usual travel from all the remote districts of the land up to Zion, those that were traveled by the people coming up to the three great annual feasts. All these are now desolate. The highways themselves join in the general mourning, as if under a sense of desolation.——Her adversaries are "at the head," *i. e.*, in power, and doing their pleasure.

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6. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts *that* find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

7. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, *and* did mock at her sabbaths.

"Like *harts*"—the male deer, who, finding no pasture, grows weak and unable to escape by flight before his pursuers. So are the people of Judah.——In v. 7 the order of thought is that all her pleasant things were remembered by her in those days of affliction when her people fell into the hands of her enemies, etc. ——In the first part of the verse, the word rendered "her miseries" is more definite; "*her wanderings*" when driven abroad into captivity.——The last word Gesenius gives, not "her sabbaths," but "her calamities," "destructions." The Hebrew word for sabbath, which means to *cease* from labor, passes in its derived forms to the meaning, *being made to cease* from prosperity and even from existence. That her enemies mocked her miseries and desolations gives a very apposite sense.

8. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honored her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

9. Her filthiness *is* in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified *himself*.

The conception of an outcast female in her filth appears in these verses, first in the clause "therefore is she removed," *i. e.*, excluded from society. The other allusions are sufficiently obvious. ——This conception gives a sad view of the dishonored and disgraceful fall of that magnificent but polluted city.——Because she would not remember her last end; would not think of the fearful consequences of such a life, and of the final ruin which the Lord had solemnly threatened; therefore "she came down wonderfully."

10. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen *that* the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command *that* they should not enter into thy congregation.

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11. All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

The Hebrew rendered "meat to relieve the soul," means precisely food to restore one's lost or waning vitality, and thus preserve life.

12. *Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

Maurer argues strongly that this first clause means, Be not for yourselves alone, all ye that pass by; pass me not with scorn or even neglect; but pause, think, and see if there be any sorrow like mine, etc. There is nothing to indicate a question. He appeals in part to Arabic usage for authority.——In the middle of the verse, "My sorrow which *is done* unto me," would be more true to the original thus: "My sorrow wherewith I am vexed or afflicted;" since the verb carries in itself the sense of bringing evil on one, and not merely the sense of *doing*. *Doing sorrow* is harsh.

13. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaileth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet; he hath turned me back; he hath made me desolate *and* faint all the day.

The fire which God sends from above is lightning—a terrible figure to represent the fire which God sent into the very bones of the suffering victim.

14. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, *and* come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall; the Lord hath delivered me into *their* hands, *from whom* I am not able to rise up.

15. The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* in a wine-press.

Figures of speech are multiplied; a yoke on her neck, made up of her sins and bound by the hand of God, against which she has no strength; the Lord "treading under foot her mighty men;" making all their strength of no account; and finally treading down the daughter [whole people] of Judah as grapes are trodden in a wine-press.

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16. For these *things* I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.

17. Zion spreadeth forth her hands, *and there is* none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that* his adversaries *should be* round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.

"I weep" does not here represent the prophet personally, but the people. The words are shaped for *their* use. No doubt Jeremiah felt all these griefs deeply as a personal affliction, but his words here are written for the public mourning of the people—probably to be chanted on their fast days.

18. The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

19. I called for my lovers, *but* they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat to relieve their souls.

It was well every way that the prophet should embody in this plaintive elegy this just and pertinent confession: "The Lord is just, and I have rebelled against him."——In v. 19, "My lovers" (as in v. 2) are the nations with whom she had been in alliance, and whose idols she had imported and worshiped.——"Meat to relieve their souls" is here said of animal food, as in v. 11.

20. Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled; my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home *there is* as death.

Here, as usual with the Hebrews, the bowels are the seat of mental pain.——"I have grievously rebelled" is another word of confession, recognizing her sin as the cause of her sufferings.

21. They have heard that I sigh; *there is* none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done *it:* thou wilt bring the day *that* thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.

22. Let all their wickedness come before thee; and do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs *are* many, and my heart *is* faint.

Her enemies taunting her and exulting in her fall, how could she exclude from her mind the thought, God will visit them, too,

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with retribution. (See Obadiah 10–16; Ps. 137: 7, and Ezek. 25: 12–17.)——Here, as in v. 12, the verb rendered "*do*" means to do evil to one; to afflict. It is a prayer or a prediction that God would afflict them as he had the Jews for their transgressions.

CHAPTER II.

The strain of this chapter goes first to show that God has brought on Zion these fearful calamities for her great sins; and then to spread before the Lord the details of her sufferings as an appeal to his compassion.

1. How hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, *and* cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

2. The LORD hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought *them* down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

The "cloud with which the Lord covered Zion" is an image of sore calamity. The beauty and glory of Israel have fallen with a great fall as from heaven to earth.——In the phrase, "*Polluted* the kingdom and its princes," the original means to pierce, mar, mutilate, to disfigure, and consequently to treat with reckless disregard, as if they were no longer sacred in his eyes.

3. He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth round about.

4. He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all *that were* pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire.

The "horn," as usual, is an emblem of power. The Lord had broken down all the military strength of the Jews.——In the next clause, the Hebrew might mean either that God had withdrawn his right hand as one who would help his people no more, or that he had caused the right hand of his people to turn back before their enemy. The ultimate sense is substantially the same on

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either construction. V. 4 shows that God's right hand was turned against them.——Those who were "pleasant to the eye in the tents of Zion," and whom "the Lord slew," were the men of war, the soldiers of her army, than whom none others could be more interesting in the eyes of a besieged and imperiled people.

5. The LORD was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath destroyed his strongholds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

6. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as *if it were of* a garden; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

V. 6 alludes to the temporary tents erected in gardens to accommodate the gardener while his tender plants need constant nursing and irrigation, or his ripened fruits require protection. These would naturally be removed when the occasion for their use had passed by. So God had removed his dwelling-place, the temple in Zion, as if it were only a temporary shelter.——Of all the sad things in the fall of Jerusalem, this was the saddest, that her solemn assemblies were broken up; her solemn feasts and sabbaths were all forsaken and even forgotten.

7. The LORD hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast.

8. The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.

This mournful elegy continually reminds the people of the agency of the Lord. It was *his* hand that had done all these things. He had discarded his altars; he had abhorred his sanctuary, and had abandoned those sacred courts to the rude sacrilegious hands of the heathen. They had thronged her halls with a noisy crowd, like that of the great festivals—like it in numbers—far unlike it in their purpose and work.——Remarkably the Hebrews speak of a measuring line as marking out for *destruction* as well as for *construction*. (See 2 Kings 21: 13, and Isa. 34: 11.)

9. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes

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are among the Gentiles: the law *is* no *more;* her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

10. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, *and* keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

Beautifully this elegy groups together those elements which made Jerusalem the joy of the whole land; not her gates and bars alone, but her kings and princes, her administration of law, and her prophets receiving visions from the Lord. All these had gone. Few objects remain to be seen in the now desolate city, and these, how sad! A few old men sitting on the ground in silence, casting dust upon their heads and girded with sackcloth! Virgins with their heads bowed down to the very earth!

11. Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

Jeremiah speaks here in his own behalf, giving utterance to the grief of his heart. Yet any Jew who should read or chant this plaintive song might use these words of himself as expressing his own bitterness of soul.——"My liver is poured upon the earth," conceives of himself as mortally wounded, his liver transfixed with some deadly shaft. This is the figure, the significance of which is that his heart is broken with grief, and that he feels himself ready to die for the anguish of his soul. Job (16: 13) has the same figure: "His archers compass me about; he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground."

12. They say to their mothers, Where *is* corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom.

Young children are dying with hunger in their mother's arms, faintly imploring corn and wine with their expiring breath.

13. What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach *is* great like the sea; who can heal thee?

The import of the first clause seems to be, What can I say to comfort thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? Can I name another

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city that has suffered as thou hast, or paint another scene of cruel woe like thine, that the sense of sympathy in sorrow may bring some poor yet possible relief? This seems to be the strain of the verse.——The first verb rendered "*witness*," means primarily to reiterate, to say a thing over and over. Following the consonants rather than the vowels for the true reading, the word will be in its primary form, where the sense—*to testify against*—is not well established. Besides, this sense is not in harmony with the strain of the passage. Hence I prefer the sense above indicated, *i. e.*, "I know not how to afford thee even the poor relief of naming another city or people that has suffered as thou hast. What can I say more to assuage thy sorrow? or to what can I compare it?" In this the prophet assumes the well-known law of suffering, that the sufferer finds a sort of relief in hearing of other woes like his own.——"Breach," in more modern phrase, would be, thy crash, thy breaking down.——"Great like the sea" gives a sense of its vastness, magnitude.

14. Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment.

Very pertinently the prophet refers to this active and prolific cause of her ruin, the influence of the false prophets. The reader will recall the frequent allusions to the false prophets in the other book of Jeremiah, chap. 2: 8, and 5: 30, 31, and 14: 13–16, and 23: 9–40, and 27: 14–18, and 29: 8, 9. The visions which they saw for the people were vain and foolish, false, and without good sense. They did not remove the cloak which concealed the sins of the people—so the original implies; but had suffered those sins to remain hidden from view, and indeed had done what they could to keep them out of sight. If they had honestly exposed those sins, they might have forestalled the captivity and saved the nation.——The word rendered "causes of banishment," means *seductions*, things that seduced her the more deeply into sin.

15. All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying*, *Is* this the city that *men* call The Perfection of beauty, The Joy of the whole earth?

16. All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed *her* up: certainly this *is* the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen *it*.

All the expressions in these verses burn with scorn and hate. The enemies of the Jews taunted them bitterly in their fall. The Scriptures charge this specially upon Edom, a people who should

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have honored and loved the Jews as descended in common with themselves from the oldest patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac. But a deep-seated envy and hate seem to have been cherished among them as a national sentiment. (See Obadiah 10–16, and Ezek. 25: 12, and 35: 5.)

17. The LORD hath done *that* which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

True to his mission as a prophet, and to his sense of the great sins of the people, Jeremiah returns continually to this vital truth, *The Lord has brought this calamity on the people for their sins.* He had threatened it long centuries ago. (See Deut. 28: 15–67, and Lev. 26: 14–39.) Now that the day of vengeance can be delayed no longer, he hath thrown down his Zion without pity; hath lifted her adversaries to power, and let them rejoice over her fall.

18. Their heart cried unto the LORD, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.

This outcry of their heart unto the Lord seems not to have been the intelligent prayer of conscious guilt imploring mercy, but rather the simple outburst of grief, making its dumb, unreflecting appeal to the compassion of God and man. The next verse does indeed speak of praying for the life of their young children dying with hunger; but there is no confession of guilt, no distinct prayer for mercy. The whole description corresponds to what we must suppose to have been the actual feelings of those smitten Jews—a fearful moral distance from God; very little sense, if any, of their own guilt, or of the demands upon them for confession and repentance; but hearts wrung with anguish, imploring compassion and pouring out the gushing floods of their emotion in bitter tears and wailings. It would seem that the prophet shaped this part of his elegy to the known sentiments of the people, and did not give full expression throughout to his own better views of the duty of repentance, confession, and submission.

19. Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thy heart like water before the face of the LORD: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.

20. Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast

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done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, *and* children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the LORD?

"At the beginning of the watches"—the point when the first of the three night-periods commences; thus give up the long and weary night to prayer and grief.——Obviously the general strain in these verses is the appeal of deep misery for compassion. In v. 20 they beseech the Lord to consider who these sufferers are. Here are mothers compelled by remorseless hunger to eat their own babes, infants still borne *upon their arm*, which is the sense of the original, rendered "children of a span long;" literally, *children of the hand, i. e.*, borne on the hand.——Here, too, are the priest and the prophet slain in the very sanctuary! Alas! it is a sad picture, and the Lord would surely have felt the most tender compassion over it, and indeed would never have either done or permitted it but for the presence of awful sin which he "could not pardon." Those mothers had burned some of their own children in the fire to Baal and Moloch. Those prophets and priests had utterly apostatized from God, and with their prodigious influence had drawn the whole people away from even common morality, and from the worship of the true God to the mad worship of idols.

21. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, *and* not pitied.

The sad picture of the murders and the slaughter of war still continues. Young and old lie promiscuously in their blood; virgins and young men have fallen before the sword. The Lord had slain them in his anger, and had seemed to have no pity.

22. Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the LORD'S anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

As in the solemn assemblies on the national Jewish festivals, the people came in crowds and thronged the courts of the temple, so the Lord had now summoned the awful terrors of war and carnage to throng thick around, so omnipresent indeed that none could escape. Even those who were yet in helpless infancy the cruel enemy had utterly destroyed.

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CHAPTER III.

In the interpretation of this chapter, we must assume either that Jeremiah spoke *of* himself, or *of* the people—*for* himself, or *for* the people—giving his own personal experience, or the experience of the people as a whole. It is of very considerable consequence to settle this question in the outset.——I accept the former theory, viz., that Jeremiah here speaks of and for himself, giving his own personal experiences, and not specially those of the people, and on these grounds: (1.) Portions of the chapter will by no means apply to the people, but do apply to the prophet perfectly; *e. g.*, v. 14 and vs. 48–66. (2.) The greater part of the chapter is in a much higher tone of piety than the other chapters in this book of Lamentations. We have had occasion to note in chapters 1 and 2 that the writer seemed studiously to adapt the religious tone to the state of the people rather than to give full expression to his own religious feelings. We are almost surprised to find its tone so low. But here we see Jeremiah himself. (3.) The whole chapter should be compared with the scattering notices throughout the prophecies of Jeremiah which give us his personal experiences; *e. g.*, chap. 11: 18–23, and 12: 1–6, and 15: 10–21, and 17: 15–18, and 18: 18–23, and 26: 12–15. This comparison goes far to show that this chapter must be the record of the same experiences. The similarity is very remarkable. (4.) The fact that in a few verses the prophet uses the plural number (*e. g.*, vs. 22 and 40–47) does not bear against this theory, for in those points he might very naturally include the people with himself. The prophet never lost his patriotism. He never ceased to love his own people, nor to identify himself with their interests and destinies. (5.) It was for every reason appropriate that Jeremiah should devote one chapter in this book to his personal experiences. They were a part of the record of the nation's calamities, a part that could not be wisely omitted from his book of prophecies, and was not; a part which for like reasons should appear in these plaintive elegies.——It is not quite obvious why this portion should be arranged in the very middle of the book rather than at the beginning or the end.——In vs. 1–18, the prophet's personal plaint is unbroken. It can scarcely be called by any softer name than *complaint*. It is certainly the dark side (and a *very* dark one) of his views of the Lord's dealings with himself. ——Vs. 21–39 are in a far more hopeful and submissive strain, indicating that the prophet has now very just views of God's mercy and compassion, and of his wise and good ends in afflicting his people.——In vs. 40–47, he speaks for the people as well as for himself, beginning with admirable exhortations, and passing on to a plaintive recital of their common calamities. Then in vs. 48–64 the prophet returns to his own sore trials, not here so much from God as from his countrymen.

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1. I *am* the man *that* hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.
2. He hath led me, and brought *me into* darkness, but not *into* light.
3. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day.
4. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.
5. He hath builded against me, and compassed *me* with gall and travail.
6. He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old.
7. He hath hedged me about, that I can not get out: he hath made my chain heavy.
8. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

The first seventeen verses remind the reader continually of Job. I can not avoid the conclusion that Jeremiah was familiar with the book of Job, and found some gratification of sympathy in the thought of a similarity between his own case and that of the ancient patriarch. Hence he makes free use of the figures and expressions that occur in the book of Job. We had occasion to notice the same thing in the imprecatory passage (Jer. 20: 14–18) which so resembles the words of Job in cursing his birthday (Job 3). In this passage the reader may compare v. 4 with Job 7: 5, and 16: 8; and v. 7 with Job 3: 23, and 19: 8; and v. 8 with Job 30: 20.

9. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone; he hath made my paths crooked.
10. He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in secret places.
11. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.
12. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.
13. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

The imitation of Job is yet more striking in this passage. Compare v. 10 with Job 10: 16; v. 12 with Job 16: 12–14; and v. 13 with Job 6: 4, and 16: 13. It is impossible to say whether, apart from such imitation of another author, Jeremiah would have used language that reflects so severely upon God. It is often the case that this law of attraction and sympathy very decidedly

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modifies and shapes an author's language. The implication in vs. 9, 11, is particularly to be noticed: "He hath made my paths crooked;" "He hath turned aside my ways." The verb in this last clause has commonly the bad sense of seducing into sin. In the present case, we must interpret Jeremiah to say only, The Lord hath led me into paths of *sore trial*, where I found myself involved in constant reproach from my people; in more or less peril of my life; in no small suffering under imprisonment and torture; and an immense amount of heart-sorrow in benevolent labors for a people who could not be won back to penitence and to God. We ought to be very slow to interpret Jeremiah's words to mean that God seduced him into sin.

14. I was a derision to all my people; *and* their song all the day.

See notes on Jer. 20: 7, 8. Those horribly wicked men who withstood Jeremiah, not only charged him with treason and sought to suppress his influence by violent persecution, but they manifestly plied the weapons of derision and scorn. This was cruelly painful to his sensitive heart, because it so weakened his hope of reclaiming and saving a people whom he tenderly loved.

15. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

17. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity.

"Covered me with ashes." Some critics, following the Septuagint and Jerome, render this, "He hath *fed* me with ashes." This is more directly in line with the thought that immediately precedes. Yet our translation is good, and seems to be best sustained by the Hebrew.

18. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

19. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

20. My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

21. This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope.

This passage is at once difficult and important. Its difficulty comes partly from the fact that the verbs rendered, "remembering," v. 19, and "hath still in remembrance," v. 20, are both in ambiguous forms. The original in the former case may be either the infinitive or the imperative; and, in the latter, may be either

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the third person feminine, or the second masculine; *i. e.*, either "My soul" (feminine) "strongly remembers," or, "Thou" (Lord) "will surely remember."——The passage is specially important as being at the point of transition from despondency to hope, from the tone of sad complaint to the tone of joyous submission and grateful trust. It would be exceedingly gratifying if we were able to trace accurately the mental processes by which this remarkable transition is made.——Critics differ widely in their interpretation of this passage. In my view, the choice lies between the two following constructions, of which the former makes the transition at the beginning of v. 19; the latter at the beginning of v. 21. ——The former may be exhibited thus: "Then I said, My confidence and hope have perished from the Lord;" I have no more good to expect from him. Then, as if the very name of the Lord, and the very strangeness of this despairing speech had started a new train of thought, he turns to prayer: "Lord, remember my affliction and my wandering; the wormwood and the gall. Thou wilt surely remember them, and my soul bows low" (*upon itself*,* as it were). Then v. 21 moves off in cheerful tone: "This I bring back to my heart, and upon it I rest in hope," etc.——The other construction is essentially that of our received translation, thus: "My confidence and hope have perished from the Lord; thinking only of my affliction and my wanderings, etc., my soul remembers them intensely, and sinks in deep despondency within me."—— Then, reflecting more deeply, I recall to mind what is brought forward in the next verse of God's great mercies, and I build my hopes there.——This construction supposes that the word "*this*," at the beginning of v. 21, looks not to what precedes, but to what follows. The location of the Hebrew words strongly favors its reference to what precedes.——I incline to favor the former construction.——The first part of this chapter (say vs. 1–41) strongly reminds us of Ps. 77. It would seem that Jeremiah must have had that touching psalm in his mind's eye. That psalm, like this passage, begins with despondency, but closes with exultant hope: "Thou holdest mine eyes waking; I am so troubled that I can not speak. . . . . Will the Lord cast off forever? Will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"——Then suddenly checking this strain of despondency and of implied reflection upon God, he says, "This way of thinking and speaking MAKES ME SICK;" I can not bear it; it prostrates my moral strength. "Let me rather recall the years of God's right hand, the glorious works of the Lord and his wonders of old." Then recalling and dwelling upon these, his heart so lately sinking begins to rise, and now it soars and exults in the majesty of Jehovah and his loving-kindness to his people.——Jeremiah passes through a similar transition from sad complaint to sweet submission; from a strain which represents God as dealing severely with

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him, to one which sees only goodness and mercy in the sorest afflictions sent from the Lord.——Of the dark side of this contrast, it is much easier to show that there *are* such phases in the experience of good men, than to show that they are morally right. In the first part of this chapter Jeremiah said what he thought and felt; but this thinking and feeling were his moral weakness, of which, no doubt, he repented deeply before God. Hence it does not stand before us on the sacred page for our imitation. It is here because it is a true record of his heart-experiences in his hours of terrible depression, and not because it is a commendable style of Christian thought and feeling.

22. *It is of* the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.
23. *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness.

V. 22 reads literally, "The mercies of Jehovah!—for we perish not; for his compassions fail not." The first clause may well be taken as an exclamation, "O the mercies of the Lord!" Then abruptly two considerations are adduced to witness to the greatness of those mercies: first, that we are not consumed; second, that his compassions are never exhausted.——He proceeds: "They are new, fresh, all the mornings; thy faithfulness is very great."

24. The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.
25. The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.

The sense of this is plain, and the sentiment charming. To take God for one's portion implies the cheerful relinquishment of all good inconsistent with his service. You accept his will as your supreme law, and cheerfully forego every thing that he declines to give. For better or for worse, you take him and his work and his reward as your own, discarding all other portions, all other good. So doing, you are welcome to hope in him. You may expect him to deal well enough by you, and you can surely afford to be satisfied with whatever his allot-ments may be. The testimony of the prophet here is that the Lord will surely do well by all those who thus receive him as their God and portion. It is safe to presume that his own experience through a life of terrible hardship testified to this great fact.

26. *It is* good that *a man* should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

The sense of this passage is too clear to be doubted, yet the Hebrew words have somewhat perplexed critics. I prefer this

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construction: "It is good both that one *should wait*, and should wait *silently*, for the salvation of God." It is not well to complain as I have done, and give scope in words of doubtful propriety to the spirit of distrust and unbelief.——Of the two important words, I take the first to be a verbal adjective, literally, to *be a waiting one;* the second an adverb, with the previous clause understood, "waiting *silently*."

27. *It is* good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

28. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.

29. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.

30. He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach.

In this matter of taking the yoke in one's youth, Jeremiah doubtless spoke from his own experience. He is supposed to have been not far from twenty years of age when the Lord put this heavy yoke of his prophetic mission upon his neck. (See Jer. 1.) He gave him then to understand that it would be a life of stern self-denial, of bitter opposition, and of great trial.——The last clause of v. 28 means, "Because God hath laid this yoke upon him." The prophet is saying here what *should be* rather than what uniformly *had been* in his own case. We may hope that, for the most part, he did sit alone and keep silence under the heavy burden of this yoke; but there were some exceptions, as the first eighteen verses of this chapter painfully show. (See also Jer. 14: 15–21, and 20: 7–18.)——These verses, considered as direction and counsel to men under sore affliction, are most admirable. What can be better than to put one's mouth in the dust, indicative of the deepest humiliation, and of the silence of the soul before God, if so be there may be hope? What is better than to accept, without a murmur, all the insults and reproaches that wicked men heap upon us?

31. For the LORD will not cast off forever:

32. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

33. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

The Lord will not cast off forever his real friends, those who humbly trust in him. He may sometimes smite them sorely in chastisement for their sins, or, as in the case of Jeremiah, may lay heavy burdens upon them, because he has hard work to be done; but he will surely have compassion in accordance with the multitude of his mercies.——V. 33 expresses its thought beauti-

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fully: "God does not afflict *from his heart;*" it is not in his heart to cause sorrow; affliction does not come forth *from his heart.* He would most gladly spare the pain of this infliction if he wisely could: if, in the nature of the case, his benevolent and wise ends could be answered as well without it.

34. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,
35. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High,
36. To subvert a man in his cause, the LORD approveth not.

The form of this Hebrew sentence makes it entirely clear that these three verses are to be constructed together, thus: God does not look with favor on these things, viz., crushing under foot the prisoner; subverting a man's inherent rights before God; defeating his rightful cause.——Some (perhaps well) read the entire three verses interrogatively, and then take the verb *to see* in its first and usual sense: Does not the Lord *see*, in the sense of noticing and calling to account these things? There is no expressed indication of a question; yet these indications are sometimes omitted where they should be supplied.

37. Who *is* he *that* saith, and it cometh to pass, *when* the LORD commandeth *it* not?

This verse seems to be a tacit allusion to those sublime words of the Psalmist (33: 9): "He spake and it was done," said with reference to the original creation of the world. Who can speak *so* and the result shall follow, when the Lord hath not commanded it? The Hebrew words for "spake," "done," and "commanded," are all taken from the psalm referred to. The sentiment therefore is, Who can compare with God in the majesty and power with which he spake this world into existence? Whose *fiat* is like his? In whose simple *word* resides such power?

38. Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?

"Things that proceed from the mouth of God" are here not so much the words he speaks as the events that come to pass at his command. The previous verse brings before the mind the fiat of the Almighty as a producing cause. "Evil and good" in this passage are not *moral, i. e.*, sin and holiness; but *physical;* calamities and blessings. This is the general subject of remark. We are bound to interpret in harmony with the course of thought and the topics under consideration. The sentiment is the same as in Amos 3: 6: "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

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39. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

The word rendered "living"* may be a noun, in which case we have the easier rendering, Wherefore should a man complain *of his life*, *i. e.*, of the sort of external life which the Lord allots to him? The parallelism is then harmonious: Why should a man complain of the punishment of his sins?——So understood the sentiment is admirable. Why should not every man accept with humble submission whatever the Lord may send upon him for his correction to turn him from his sins and save him unto higher holiness?——If, however, the word be taken as an adjective—a man yet living—the sense is, Why should one complain so long as God spares him to live, since his sins have, on the score of justice, forfeited his life, so that any thing short of death is mercy.

40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

41. Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

42. We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned.

At this point it was exceedingly appropriate that the prophet should change his strain of discourse to the plural, should include the people with himself, and so exhort both them and himself to most thorough, self-searching repentance, prayer, and confession. The last clause was painfully true; the sins of the people had reached a depth of depravity that God could not pardon. (See 2 Kings 24: 4.)

43. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.

44. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that *our* prayer should not pass through.

I understand the first clause of v. 43 to mean, "Covered *thyself* in thine anger" as a manifestation of his displeasure. To cover or hide the face from any one is a natural expression of extreme displeasure, and is also common with the Hebrews. See this in its negative form Ps. 22: 24: "God does not hide his face from his afflicted one."——V. 44 has a similar figure applied to prayer. Compare v. 8, where the prophet had said the same thing of himself: "When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer."—— What can be more dreadful than this! To have all hearing of our prayer shut off; clouds enveloping our great Father's throne which no prayer of ours can pierce through! To our joy let us remember that this can never be, save because of our great sins, and

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that then true and deep repentance scatters this cloud away: "For unto this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66: 2).

45. Thou hast made *us* as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.

46. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

47. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.

The captive people were scornfully despised, accounted as the offscouring and refuse of all vile things among the foreign nations whither they are sent. Traces of this scorn appear in Ps. 137. ——Opening the mouth wide against one is a frequently recurring figure or rather *token* of contempt. (See Lam. 2: 16 and Job 16: 10.) This strong and general feeling of contempt for the Jews was due partly to the *peculiarity* of their religious rites and usages, and partly to their *exclusiveness*, which would be often accounted intolerance.

48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

49. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission,

50. Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven.

51. Mine eye affecteth my heart, because of all the daughters of my city.

In these points the prophet could not unite the people with himself and say "*Our eyes*," etc. But of himself he could truly say it. He had said before, "O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night," etc. (Jer. 9: 1). The strong expression, "rivers of waters," for intense weeping, is altogether oriental. (See Jer. 9: 18, and Ps. 119: 136.)——In v. 51, the prophet means, "Mine eye saddens my heart;" my tears, instead of affording relief, seem only to make my sorrows the more poignant.——The weeping prophet felt that he could not cease to weep until the Lord should look down propitiously and mercifully from heaven and reverse the sore calamities of his people. This was the great burden of his prayer and of his heart.

52. Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.

53. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.

54. Waters flowed over my head; *then* I said, I am cut off.

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55. I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.

56. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.

57. Thou drewest near in the day *that* I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.

These verses give the prophet's experiences of prison-life. Here are the thoughts of his heart and the fearful trials he passed through when cast repeatedly into prison and sometimes subjected to torture.——In v. 52 the last words, "without cause," qualify the first words "mine enemies" thus: "My causeless enemies"—men I had never harmed, and who hated me with no good reason and hunted my life as the cruel hunter pursues the harmless bird.——"They have cut off my life in the dungeon," does not state an actual fact, but probably the *purpose and aim* of his enemies. Twice they had thrust him into a dungeon under ground, viz., once in the prison of Jonathan the scribe (37: 15, 16, 20), which was a dungeon with its underground cells, of which the prophet said to the king, "Do not send me back *lest I die there:*" and again in the dungeon of Malchiah where he "sunk in the mire" (38: 6), and whence the good Ebed-melech saved him because he would else have died there. When we add to such imprisonments the scourging that preceded the first (37: 15), and the starvation which they had superadded to the last (38: 9), we shall do his enemies no injustice if we assume that they meant to take his life. Perhaps these severe imprisonments did shorten his days, and possibly this is what he meant to say.——In the clause, "Waters flowed over my head" (v. 54), he may have tacitly compared his case to that of Jonah, who said (2: 3, 5), "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me;" or to the case of David (Ps. 42: 7), who has the same expression to represent his overwhelming affliction in the treason and death of his dear but graceless Absalom.——It is grateful to our hearts to know that this afflicted prophet found God near to his soul in his deep dungeon. From this terrible darkness and mire he lifted up his imploring cry to his God and received the joyous reply, "Fear not." The Lord did not close his ear to the outbreaking of his agony of prayer. Ah, indeed, he never does! When his real children have cried unto him from the depth of their distress, was it ever known that he shut his ear against their breathing and their cry?

58. O LORD, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.

59. O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause.

60. Thou hast seen all their vengeance *and* all their imaginations against me.

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61. Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, *and* all their imaginations against me;

62. The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day.

As between himself and his virulent, cruel, and wicked persecutors, the Lord had fully interposed, vindicating and avenging his faithful servant and confounding his enemies.——It will be remembered that they had charged him with treason against the State. But the Lord made his providences testify to the wisdom of his counsels and to the purity of his heart. They had also charged him with being a false prophet, but in this point also the Lord fully vindicated his character.

63. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I *am* their music.

64. Render unto them a recompense, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.

65. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.

66. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD.

This passage must be expounded in the same way with various other passages in the Psalms which breathe similar imprecations. The pious heart reaches essentially the same stand-point of view which God has when he dooms incorrigible sinners to destruction. Both alike look upon the wicked as hopelessly incorrigible—past the moral possibility of being reclaimed to repentance. Both alike feel the resistless demands of justice, and can, in fact, say nothing less than this: Let justice take its course! Let the great interests of a moral universe be saved and not sacrificed. Let these sinners, maddened in soul by their sins past all recovery, "go to their own place" and to their righteous doom! Not in anger, but in sorrow; not as hating these doomed wretches, but as loving all other beings; as loving the masses who constitute the vast kingdom of Jehovah, and as sustaining the honor, the prestige, and the glorious moral power of the Almighty's throne, so they accept the hardened sinner's doom.

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter resumes the strain of a funeral elegy from the close of chap. 2. The prophet bewails the calamities which have fallen on Jerusalem as a whole, on her infant children and on her guilty princes and leading men.

1. How is the gold become dim! *how* is the most fine gold

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changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

2. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

In the first clause I understand the word "gold" to represent, not the literal and identical gold which was yet in the temple at its fall, nor the chief men in either civil or religious stations; but in general the glory and beauty of Zion. What was exceedingly beautiful and glorious has now faded and lost its splendor.——The precious "stones of the sanctuary" are probably its building stones; tenderly sacred in the eyes of God's people, now thrown about rudely anywhere!——"The precious sons of Zion," including probably both priests and princes who would naturally be compared to fine gold, how are they now only "as earthen pitchers," vile wares!

3. Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people *is become* cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

4. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them.

5. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

These points in the description reveal the horrors of *famine.* Had the mothers of Jerusalem become heartless and cruel like the ostrich forsaking her eggs, that they should cease to furnish them sustenance? Job (chap. 39: 13–16) gives the character of the ostrich who "leaveth her eggs on the earth and forgetteth that the foot may crush them; she is hardened against her young ones as though they were not hers."——The last clause of v. 5 might be read, "Those who were borne on scarlet cloths now make their bed on the dung-hills." (See Job 24: 8.)

6. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

This verse sets forth that the punishment of Jerusalem was more terrible than that of Sodom, because the latter was sudden and transient, while the former was the slow torture of famine and the lingering slaughter of a siege. The last clause, "No hands stayed on her," means, No human hands came crashing down upon

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Sodom. The judgments that overwhelmed her were not *hurled down* by any human hands. They fell in one crushing shower from the Lord God Almighty. The original word * has this well-established sense, *e. g.*, Hos. 11: 6; Jer. 23: 19, etc.

7. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire:

8. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

The word rendered "*Nazarites*" seems to refer here to her *princes*, considered either as *consecrated* to God and thus *set apart*—this being the proper significance of the word—or as being distinguished from the masses of the people by social and civil position. Aforetime they shone in splendor; now, how changed!—— The word rendered "rubies" is thought to mean *red coral.* The word for "*their polishing*" means their *bodies;* their *persons*, which shone like sapphire. But now their form is darker than blackness itself.

9. *They that be* slain with the sword are better than *they that be* slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for *want of* the fruits of the field.

10. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Remarkably this same specific fact—that women, by nature tender-hearted, have sodden and eaten their own offspring—was predicted long before (Deut. 28: 56, 57)—a mournful proof of the terrible severity of that famine which the Lord had so many times through Jeremiah threatened to their unbelieving ears, which they *would not hear;* but which came nevertheless in ever-memorable retribution!

11. The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

12. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

The thought which v. 12 imputes to "the kings of the earth and to all the inhabitants of the world" respecting the strength and

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safety of the holy city, seems to me to be rather suggested by their own self-confidence than learned from those kings and people, or safely inferred from any sober estimate of the military strength of the city compared with the power that might be brought against it. On the part of the Jews, this extreme self-confidence came of their strong presumption that the Almighty was on their side and would not let his temple and his holy name go down before the heathen. Alas, they did not consider that their sins had provoked him to wrath, so that instead of being their Great Defender, he must, by virtue of his own eternal attributes, become their terrible Destroyer! This precisely was their grand mistake! They had lost the true idea of God as holy and just, and as demanding pure hearts and clean hands in his covenant people; and moreover as one who for evermore holds all nations to justice and righteousness, and visits fearful retribution on guilty oppressors.——Not in these verses alone, but in many other passages throughout these elegiac chapters, the writer seems to have given the current views of the people rather than his own or the views of God. The elegy on the princes (vs. 2, 7, above) is almost an *eulogy*. It gives the popular conceptions of their dignity and high position rather than their true moral character, which certainly was exceedingly corrupt and revolting.

13. For the sins of her prophets, *and* the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,

14. They have wandered *as* blind *men* in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

15. They cried unto them, Depart ye; *it is* unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn *there*.

16. The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favored not the elders.

The false prophets and the wicked priests were the chief instigators of that persecution before which some (we know not how many) just men like Urijah (26: 20–23) fell. For their sins they now wander like blind men in the streets, as men so stained with the innocent blood of victims murdered by their own hand, that none could touch their garments.——V. 15 still describes the fortunes of these bloody men. By-standers, perhaps representing the true prophets or other good men, cry out before them, "Away! away!" Touch not those bloody murderers! And when they were driven from their country into exile, the people there say of them, They shall never return to their native land! This I take

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to be the sense of the words, "They shall no more sojourn *there!*" ——V. 16 still speaks of the same class, our translation giving justly the ultimate sense of the original. The word rendered "*anger*" is the common one for *face*. Here "the face of the Lord" is thought by some to mean *his presence*, the awful manifestations of his power and vengeance, which would seem to bring God himself so very near. This *scattered* them abroad ("divided them").

17. As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation *that* could not save *us*.

18. They hunt our steps, that we can not go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

19. Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

20. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

Here the elegy speaks for the masses of the people. Up to the last moment their eyes were looking for some help that proved all in vain. They expected the Egyptians to intervene, but *they* could not save. The enemy hunted them so closely that none were safe in their streets. Clearly, their final end had come!—— V. 20 must refer primarily to Zedekiah, then on their throne, under whom they had hoped to live in peace in their exile. They seem to have hoped that the Chaldeans would take him unharmed with themselves into captivity, and allow them to live quietly under him as their king. But he was "taken in their pits," as a lion or a bear in the pit-holes dug to entrap them, and he found little mercy.——This language, "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord," implies that in their view they could not breathe the breath of life without their king; that his presence was vital to their existence, even as the air men breathe; and that this life-power in their king was due to his being "the anointed of the Lord." In other words, they presumed that God would sustain the nation's life so long as they had a king of David's line, sitting on David's throne, and anointed with the holy oil. The same sort of confidence which they felt in their temple, in their priesthood, and in their entire ritual service, embraced also their anointed king. Alas, that they should have so exalted the form and the letter above the essence and the spirit! How could they assume so confidently that God would save their nation out of his regard to kings so base and wicked as the last three—apostate offspring of the good Josiah—Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin his son, and Zedekiah.

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21. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup also shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.

22. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins.

This address to Edom is keen irony. "Rejoice and be glad" if thou wilt, O Edom; go on! So wilt thou only the more surely seal thy righteous doom! Let Edom exult in our fall, if she will. The wine-cup of God's wrath will come round to her lips all the sooner and the surer; she will be drunken, and will expose herself in her nakedness and filth before all the nations. (See Jer. 25: 15–36.)——But as for Zion, this will close up her punishment. She has no other such captivity to bear, *i. e.*, for these sins and within the purview of this prophet. But God will visit Edom with righteous and fearful retributions, and will expose her sins to the gaze of the world by his retributive judgments therefor.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter also is elegiac. The sad state of the Jewish people, and of their beloved city, is made the ground of their plea before God for his compassion and restoring mercy.

1. Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.

2. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.

3. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers *are* as widows.

It is pleasant to see the language and the tone of prayer blended with this strain of bitter lamentation. It may well be our enduring joy that under any affliction however severe, we may always look prayerfully and hopefully to the hand which visits upon us the affliction. "Come, and let us return to the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hos. 6: 1). So here the writer brings up before God the desolations and the woes of his people, as reasons why he should consider their case and return in his mercy to restore and to save.

4. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us.

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5. Our necks *are* under persecution: we labor, *and* have no rest.

6. We have given the hand *to* the Egyptians, *and to* the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.

It was probably in the straitness of the siege that the supply of water in the city failed, and they had to buy it at high rates. ——In v. 6, the term "Assyrians" must mean the Chaldeans, as in Jer. 2: 18. Ancient Assyria, with Nineveh for its center and capital, was practically absorbed in the great Chaldean empire, with Babylon for its center. The latter embraced nearly the same tribes and peoples within its vast domain as the former, and was indeed little more or other than a new edition of the Assyrian empire. Hence it is not surprising that the old name, "Assyria," should sometimes be given it.——To "give the hand" is here to *become their servants*, to come into relations of service and tribute in order to get their bread.

7. Our fathers have sinned, and *are* not; and we have borne their iniquities.

8. Servants have ruled over us: *there is* none that doth deliver *us* out of their hand.

9. We gat our bread with *the peril of* our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness.

10. Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine.

A wholesome moral tone is given to this song of lamentation by the frequent recognition of the nation's great sins as the moral cause of its desolations. So here, it was because our fathers had sinned grievously that they were cut off prematurely and are no more. We, too, are suffering for their iniquity.——"Servants," the subordinate officers of Nebuchadnezzar or of Pharaoh, have ruled over us, and none can remove from us their yoke.——"The sword of the wilderness" is probably the sword of the robber bands of the desert, to whom they would be exposed whether they went for bread to Egypt or to Babylon. Either way their route would lead them across a portion of the great Arabian desert, where "the sword of the wilderness" might waylay and destroy them.

11. They ravished the women in Zion, *and* the maids in the cities of Judah.

12. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honored.

13. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood.

14. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music.

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All classes were subjected to extreme personal abuse. It is one of the horrors of war that, in the sack of a captured city, the conquerors are often allowed to perpetrate the most appalling and horrible outrages.——In v. 13, the best critics read, "The young men took up the mill-stone," *i. e.*, to carry and to work it. Children had burdens of wood laid on them beyond their strength, and staggered under their load. The elders ceased to sit in the gate for social enjoyment, or for the administration of justice.

15. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning.

16. The crown is fallen *from* our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!

17. For this our heart is faint; for these *things* our eyes are dim.

18. Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.

All joy and honor have ceased. Alas! that we have so grievously sinned!—another wholesome admission that their national sins have brought upon them this desolation.——It was peculiarly afflictive to every pious heart that their ever-honored Mt. Zion had become so desolate, so abandoned of its former worshipers, that now, instead of men bowing reverently there in worship, the foxes go up and down upon it.

19. Thou, O LORD, remainest forever; thy throne from generation to generation.

20. Wherefore dost thou forget us forever, *and* forsake us so long time?

21. Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

22. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

Under a sense of human frailty, the passing away of generations and the falling of earthly thrones, it is a relief to the pious heart to turn to God and say: "Thou, Lord, remainest forever; thy throne from generation to generation." The contrast is refreshing, and inspires hope in the saddest heart, especially when we truly accept this everlasting God as the enduring portion of our souls. The same strain of thought and feeling pervades Ps. 102—a psalm which indeed is adapted to the condition of the Jews in their exile: "I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declineth; I am withered like grass; but thou, O Lord, shalt endure forever, and thy remembrance unto all genera-

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tions." Why dost thou forget and forsake us *so long?*——The prayer, "Turn us unto thee," is beautifully appropriate, since there could be no hope of their return save through the gracious quickening and the persuasive drawing of their divine Father.——The prayer, "Renew our days as of old," means, Restore to us such days as those. Renew to us the blessings we enjoyed in those ancient times.——"But thou hast utterly rejected us," closes this plaintive elegy in the spirit of the entire song—unutterable sadness of heart, as of one under a crushing sense of the just wrath of the Almighty.

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THE PREMILLENNIAL ADVENT OF CHRIST.

THIS phrase, taken to mean that the second personal advent of Christ is premillennial, represents a system of opinions respecting yet unfulfilled prophecy, and also respecting the nature and design of the present Christian dispensation, which is widely at variance with the views presented in this and the preceding volumes on the Old Testament prophets. The somewhat extensive prevalence of these opinions and the enterprise with which they are advocated seem to demand for them a special discussion.

The following points are supposed to be elementary in this system.——(1.) During the millennium [a period of one thousand years] Jesus Christ will reign on this earth visibly present in his glorified body.——(2.) His second coming will immediately precede and introduce this millennial age.——(3.) Simultaneously with this second coming, all the righteous dead will rise in their glorified and immortal bodies, and will live and reign with Christ on the earth during this millennium.——(4.) The wicked living on the earth, at the moment of Christ's second coming, will mostly be destroyed by the fearful judgments which will attend that coming. ——(5.) The world is held to be already ripe for this coming, so that it may be and ought to be expected at any moment.—— (6.) Hence there can be no conversion of the world prior to Christ's second coming.——(7.) No such conversion was ever contemplated in the plan of God, or indicated in prophecy.

While these general and elementary positions are held (as I suppose) by all who accept the premillennial advent of Christ, there may be indefinite variety in regard to sundry collateral opinions and speculations. It may therefore be quite impossible to state fully or discuss exhaustively every shade of opinion held by the diversified believers in the premillennial advent. Nor is this necessary. Some of these opinions are pure speculation—conjectures, guesses—upon points as to which the Bible has no certain voice. Thus (*e. g.,*) it is of small account to debate the question in celestial geography, whether this earth, purified at the last day, is to be the location of the future eternal heaven. I do not believe the doctrine, for in my view the Scriptures disprove rather than sustain it. Yet some good and learned men have believed it. There are two reasons why I feel no great interest in debating it: (1.)

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The question has very little practical value at present.——(2.) It is doubtful whether it will ever (under our present light) be so conclusively settled as to foreclose all future differences of opinion. I propose therefore to pass that and kindred speculations with no waste of time.

But there are some points held in connection with premillennial views that have momentous importance, bearing vitally upon the faith, the prayers, the gospel-labors, the whole Christian life of God's people, not to say also upon the wisdom and benevolence of God as illustrated before both men and angels in the grand scheme of human salvation. Such points call for sober and earnest discussion.——In order to make this proposed discussion definite and satisfactory to candid inquirers after truth, it is of the first importance that the system of opinions with which it takes issue should be before us in a well-defined shape, and, if practicable, in a form generally accredited by the living adherents of the system. On this point I have had real difficulty. Among the advocates of the premillennial doctrines whom I have chanced to meet, almost every one has claimed to have his own peculiar theory, and hence has maintained his right of dissent, more or less, from every body else. If this were the case generally throughout American and English Christendom, it would be of small avail to undertake a discussion of the premillennarian system, for the reason that the system itself would be so Protean, so various or so fluctuating, as to be practically intangible. There are at best some real obstacles of this sort to be encountered. I can only endeavor to meet them with candor, and in love alike to Christian men and to vital truth.

I am not aware that any volume issued in this country has received the official or general indorsement of those who hold premillennial doctrines so that it may be taken as an absolute standard. The works which seem to be most fully and widely accredited, and which therefore come nearest to the position of standards, are the late Dr. George Duffield's "Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to the Second Coming of Christ;" and Dr. David N. Lord's Essays in his Theological and Literary Journal, 1848–56. I shall aim therefore to present the premillennarian system of these authors.

I understand both Drs. Duffield and Lord to hold the following views.——(1.) That the "kingdom of God" [or of "heaven"], as the phrase is used by Daniel (2: 44, and 7: 17), by Christ (*e. g.* Matt. 4: 17, and Mark 1: 14, 15) and by the apostles (*e. g.*, Acts 20: 25, and Rom. 14: 17) was *not* the gospel age and dispensation as inaugurated by Jesus and fully opened at his ascension by founding the Christian church, sending the gospel call to every creature, and by both promising and shedding forth the Holy Ghost; but, on the contrary, was nothing more or less than this millennial reign of Christ one thousand years with his risen saints after his second coming.——Hence (2.) they held that the main spiritual work of Christ and also the work of his servants from that day to this, is essentially a *heralding dispensation*—a John-the-

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Baptist work, designed chiefly to call attention to Christ's second coming, to raise expectation and to inspire faith and hope in that august event.

(3.) That Jesus never thought of converting the world by the preaching of gospel truth and the mission of the Spirit; never designed these agencies for so great a work and result; never looked upon the masses of men as a harvest-field, and upon his people as the laborers, with his truth as the instrument and his Spirit as the efficient power to gather this harvest; but prepared these agencies for the twofold purpose (*a*) of manifesting their inherent inefficiency and thus preparing the way for something better, and (*b*) of fore-heralding his second coming, reserving the effective power for setting up his kingdom on earth till that perfect dispensation.——(4.) Consequently, that those who have planned, prayed, and labored for the conversion of the world in the present dispensation, and by means of the agencies and powers already provided of God, have altogether mistaken the mission of God's people, have misconceived the divine plan, and consequently have seriously marred the Lord's work.——(5.) That at Christ's second coming the greater portion of the wicked will be destroyed from the face of the earth; the smaller portion may be spared. The portion destroyed will certainly include all Romanists—all the European nations that have sustained the Pope and the Romish faith.——(6.) The raised saints in their immortal bodies will live and reign with Christ over all the surviving populations of the earth, "ruling and not ruled;" and during these one thousand years, they will carry the missionary work of converting the nations to its glorious consummation.——(7.) At Christ's second coming the Jews will be restored literally to their own land, and converted to Christ; Judaism, with slight modifications, will be reëstablished; the land of Palestine will experience some geological changes; Jerusalem will become the center and capital of Messiah's kingdom and the location of his throne, where he will, from time to time, appear in visible manifestations of himself to his favored people.——(8.) There will be two final judgment days; the first for all the righteous who have lived up to that time, to occur precisely at Christ's second coming, at the beginning of his millennial reign; the second, for all the wicked, at the end of this millennium. The only judgment which the wicked will have at Christ's second coming, is to be *national*, not individual and personal, and will consist in destroying them from the face of the earth, and not in a public hearing of their case before the universe, and the consequent award of eternal destiny according to their deeds. Such is the system of doctrines taught in the volumes referred to.

Although it will involve some repetition, it may conduce to a more clear and distinct view of the whole subject, if, changing slightly their order, I place over against each other some of the salient points of antagonism between this premillennial system and the Bible; thus:

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THE PREMILLENNIAL SYSTEM.	THE BIBLE.
1. At Christ's second coming the righteous only will rise from the dead.	1. "The hour is coming" [the *one* hour], "in the which *all* that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." (John 5: 28, 29.)
2. There will be two distinct days of final judgment; one for all the righteous; the other for all the wicked—which days are separated by an interval of one thousand years.	2. "God hath appointed a day" [one day] "in the which he will judge the *world* in righteousness." (Acts 17: 31.)
3. The "kingdom of heaven," in the New Testament sense, is *not* the reign of Christ in and during the gospel age; did *not* begin at or near his ascension; has *not* begun yet.	3. The New Testament "kingdom of heaven" *is* the gospel reign of Christ; began fully at his ascension to heaven, and has been in active operation ever since—to be consummated when they shall no more hurt or destroy, because the knowledge of the Lord [Jesus] shall fill all the earth.
4. The present age—the interval between Christ's first advent and his second—is not a *working*, but is a *waiting* dispensation, the plan of God being that his people throughout this entire period should (like John the Baptist) proclaim Christ's coming "near at hand," and wait for it in constant faith and expectation as to open the grand era of effective spiritual power for bringing the world into allegiance to Christ.	4. The present age is designed of God, and therefore ought to be, as to all his people, a *working*, and not, in the premillennial sense, a *waiting* dispensation, its work being to preach a Savior crucified and risen; salvation fully made ready; all the nations called of God through his people to embrace it while yet it is an "accepted time."
5. For purposes of spiritual power upon the hearts of men, either to comfort and strengthen his people, or to reprove the world of sin, it was *not* expedient that Christ should go away (bodily), and send only the Holy Ghost to do personally his spiritual work; therefore his	5. For both the Christian life of saints and the conversion of sinners, it *was* expedient that Christ should go away (John 16: 7) bodily, and that the Comforter, who is the Spirit of truth, should come. Therefore Christians should be perfectly satisfied with Christ's own plan,

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people should not be satisfied with the present inefficient agencies for the Christian life, and for the conversion of the world, but should continually look forward to Christ's personal re-appearing in bodily form, as being the dispensation of perfect and effective spiritual power for subduing the world to his sway.

6. In the plan of God, the effective agencies for converting the world are *not* his revealed truth, are *not* the preaching of this truth by frail, mortal men; are *not* the attending power of the Holy Ghost: but *are* the glorified presence of Christ with his risen saints; *are* the consuming judgments to fall on the wicked at Christ's second advent; *are* the preaching of the risen saints in their immortal bodies, and in their glorified state.

7. Hence the effective agencies for the conversion of the world, not having been provided at the first advent of Christ, and not to be provided until after his second advent, it was not in God's plan to convert men on any large scale during the present age, nor did the instructions of Christ to his disciples contemplate either this large work or these great results. In yet more explicit terms, the world can never be converted by such agencies as gospel truth, the preaching of mortal men, and the work of the Holy Ghost; and God never designed it should be.

and with his solemn indorsement of it ("I tell you the truth," etc.; John 16: 7), and should, with all confidence and joy, rely upon the very agencies which Jesus gave them for their own Christian life on earth, and for the conversion of the world.

6. The gospel reign in the present age is an empire of truth, having Christ its "King" (John 18: 36, 37); "it hath pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save men" (1 Cor. 1: 21), the Lord "opening their hearts" by his Spirit and providence; by his Spirit teaching and enforcing gospel truth, and so turning and renewing human hearts from sin to holiness.

7. Jesus did precisely and positively require his disciples to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," assuring them of his presence (Matt. 28: 20), and of his most ample power (Matt. 28: 18), and promising to send the Divine Spirit to convict and convert men under their labors. (John 16: 7–11, and Luke 24: 49, and Acts 2: 33.) These very agencies are appointed of God for the purpose of converting the world; they are perfectly adapted to this result; and God has predicted their triumphant success. The Hebrew prophets foresaw and foreshadowed both the nature and the results of the gospel age; they give its working forces, and declare, from the very mouth of God, that these forces will avail to convert the world to Christ.

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8. Consequently, those who believe in the conversion of the world before Christ's second coming, and who work for it, are in very great error—so great that it can be accounted for only by assuming a wrong heart. Hence they must surely expect some significant rebuke from the Almighty.	8. Consequently all those who believe in and work for the salvation of the world may have the comfort of knowing that they are laboring to fulfill Christ's great command; are following the steps of Paul; are doing the very work foreshown in ancient prophecy, indicated in God's providence, and taught them day by day by his Spirit abiding in their hearts, so that they need fear no rebuke from Jesus for their labors and sacrifices in the work which he himself has prescribed.
9. Judaism (with only slight changes) is to be reëstablished at Jerusalem, in the midst of the Jews, literally restored to Palestine.	9. Judaism, with its rites and sacrifices, has done its work, and can never return, nor is there any good reason to anticipate the restoration of the Jews, as of old, to the land of their fathers.

These points will suffice to show the nature and mainly the extent of the antagonism between the premillennial system and the Bible. It only remains to show (1), that the premillennial authors, above referred to, are fairly represented in this analysis; and (2), that the Bible also has been truly represented on the other side.

I. First in order is the premillennial doctrine, that *at Christ's second coming the righteous only will rise from the dead.*——Dr. Duffield's views on this point may be seen affirmatively on pages 162, 164, 366; and to the point that the wicked are not raised till the end of the millennium on pages 166, 367. In these passages he is giving in running outline his views of the succession of these great events. Precisely at Christ's second coming "the saints of all ages shall return with Christ to the earth and receive their bodies raised from the dead." But not until the close of the millennium, one thousand years subsequent to the resurrection of the righteous, shall "all the nations of the wicked be raised from the dead." "The promiscuous throng of the wicked dead shall be raised at the end of the thousand years," etc. Dr. Lord propounds the same views; Journal 1: 485, and 2: 659, 697.——Over against this, the Bible doctrine is most explicit. We have testimony from the lips of the great Judge himself, thus: "The hour is coming, in the which *all that are in their graves* shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5: 28, 29). The reader will observe that all this is to take place at one well-defined "hour," not at two periods a full

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thousand years asunder; that *all* who are in their graves come forth then, and not the righteous dead only; also that of the masses raised, some rise to life; others, to damnation, showing that both the righteous and the wicked are to be raised at one and the same time.——Again, John declares (Rev. 20: 12, 13), "I saw the dead, small and great" (an expressive phrase for all classes), "stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life" (showing that the righteous are there); and further, that preparatory to this universal judgment scene the sea gave up the dead which were in it (the righteous and the wicked both and alike), "and death and hell" (Hades) "delivered up the dead which were in them"—Death having no longer the power to hold the vast populations of earth, neither the good nor the bad under his dominion. A resurrection in which the sea gives up the dead [bodies] which have been in it, and in which Death resigns his long-held dominion over our common mortality, must be universal, embracing at one and the same time both the righteous and the wicked.——To this agree the words of Paul in his remarkable Confession of Faith before Felix (Acts 24: 15): "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." And finally Daniel speaks of those that "sleep in the dust of the earth" as awaking, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." ——It would seem that this testimony so explicit and so reiterated ought to be deemed decisive.

The argument, however, is not properly completed without due notice of what is by some regarded as an explicit counter-statement, affirming that the resurrection of the just is "the first resurrection." (Rev. 20: 4–6.) The essential parts of this passage are these: "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." On such the second death hath no power, but "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."——This passage is supposed by some to prove a first resurrection of the righteous only.——To this I reply: (1.) It indicates a doubtful cause to appeal to a single proof-text in a book so eminently symbolic and so highly poetic as the Apocalypse, and array it against numerous plain, explicit, and unsymbolic declarations like those of the same author in his gospel, of Paul also, and of Daniel.——(2.) In this passage, John does not say that he saw the *bodies* of the saints—much less that he saw them rise from their graves. Indeed, he says very expressly that he saw, not their bodies, but their "*souls*." This falls very far short of affirming the resurrection of their bodies; indeed, it seems designed to exclude the idea of a bodily resurrection. How should he see their "*souls*" unless they were disembodied, *i. e.*, souls without bodies, in their separate state?

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This view of his meaning is confirmed by his vision of the souls of the martyrs who had been slain (chap. 6: 9–11), where all must admit that those souls were in their disembodied state.——(3.) This vision of the souls of the martyrs is unquestionably coördinate with that recorded (6: 9–11) and seen upon the opening of the fifth seal. In both visions the things seen are human souls; in both they are the souls of martyrs slain for the word of God, and for the testimony borne by them for Jesus. In the first vision they are seen *under the altar* pouring out their prayer that God would judge and avenge their blood on their persecutors; but in this second vision, the thing is done; their blood has been fearfully avenged; the previously imperiled cause of Jesus is signally triumphant, and *they triumph in its glorious victories!* This is one of the salient points in this entire book—comfort to the persecuted saints; their faith and patience sustained by visions of the blessed future before them, this blessed future lying not only in their own personal rest in the heavenly world, but in the positive triumph of the very kingdom of Jesus for the sake of which they suffered unto torture and death, but are permitted to see it borne on through conflict to victory—through blood and fire to glorious triumph. This change in their state is strongly put in symbol—souls seen first in the agony of prayers and cries to God from *under* the altar, but seen last on thrones, living and reigning with Christ, and triumphing in all his joy over Satan chained, all enemies hopelessly fallen, and the world reposing in peace and purity beneath Immanuel's sway. This change is to them *life from the dead;* well put in symbol as a very resurrection.——But (4.) The same use of the resurrection as a symbol appears in Isaiah (chap. 26: 14, 19), and also in Ezekiel (chap. 37: 1–14)—books with which John was entirely familiar, and from which very many of his symbols and figures were drawn.——(5.) Without assuming to speak positively on a passage in which so little is said and so much is left unsaid, I give my views of the remaining clauses, thus: "They lived and reigned with Christ;" "*lived,*" not in the sense of mere existence, but in the sense of real life, the highest blessedness; "reigned," not necessarily in the sense of exercising regal power, but (as in 1 Cor. 4: 8) in the sense of a most desirable state, the consummation of blessedness. Such was the joy of the martyrs in the day of Messiah's triumph over Satan and his legions, the human and the infernal. "But the rest of the [righteous] dead" had no such exquisite transcendent life (*i. e.*, joy) until after this thousand years. They will have their time of joy in its season, but this (of the martyrs) comes first in order—the first great baptism of blessedness which may fitly be called in symbol a "resurrection." To which exposition the manifest doctrine of the whole book of Revelation corresponds, viz., preëminent glory and joy for the Christian martyrs. See also the doctrine of Paul (2 Tim. 2: 12): "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him;" and (Rom. 8: 17): "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together;" and of Peter (1 Eps. 4: 13): "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are par-

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takers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."——(6.) But finally, if it be conceded that the passage means a literal resurrection of bodies, it certainly limits this resurrection most explicitly *to the Christian martyrs of that age*, and does not embrace all the righteous dead at Christ's second coming. "I saw the souls of" *whom?* Of "*them that were beheaded* for the witness of Jesus;" and beyond all question the same souls whom he saw (6: 9–11) "under the altar." These lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not *live* in this sense of living till after one thousand years were finished. If it be claimed that "the rest of the dead" are the wicked, in what sense do they *live* (*i. e.*, "live and reign with Christ") after the thousand years are past? Hence, even admitting this resurrection to be that of human bodies, it is restricted to a very few, and classes itself with that stated by Matthew (27: 52, 53) as occurring at the resurrection of Jesus, and by no means amounts to a resurrection of all the righteous dead and those only at Christ's second coming.——The special difficulties and importance of this passage will (perhaps) justify this extended discussion.

II. This premillennarian system sets forth two final judgment days, one for all the righteous at Christ's second coming; the other for all the wicked, at least a full thousand years later.

The Bible doctrine on this point appears in Christ's own words (Matt. 25: 31–46), a passage which sets forth that "the Son of man comes in his glory" (his second coming); that all the holy angels come with him; that he sits upon the throne of his glory; that all nations (all the human race) are gathered before him; that he separates them one from another, the righteous from the wicked, placing the righteous on his right hand and the wicked on his left; and that he then most solemnly assigns to each class its eternal destiny. It is not easy to see how a more specific and precise statement than this could be framed. Every point made in it assumes one common scene of judgment for all mankind; every point goes to prove the theory of two distinct and remote periods of final judgment untenable and impossible.——Next, let the reader recur to the testimony (given also by Christ) in John 5: 27–29, which declares that the Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment, and then proceeds to define this judgment by saying, "*The* hour is come" (some one momentous hour) "in which *all*" (not a part, but *all*) "that are in their graves shall come forth," the good to a resurrection of life; the evil, to a resurrection of damnation. One common, universal resurrection, followed by one common, universal judgment, is most manifestly the doctrine of this declaration.——Next, let us note the testimony of Paul in his sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17: 31): "He (God) hath appointed a day" (one day; not two, not many) "in the which he will judge the *world* in righteousness [not a fractional part of it one day, and the balance some other day].——We have yet further testimony from Paul, appearing in his Epistle to the Romans

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(2: 5–16), where he speaks of some as "treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and of God's revelation of righteous judgment," for "God will render to every man according to his deeds;" to the well-doing, eternal life, but to those who will not obey the truth, indignation and wrath . . . . . "*in the day* when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." This passage introduces many circumstances, sets forth the principles on which the decisions of that day will be awarded to men of every nation, Jew or Gentile, and to men in every stage of religious knowledge, with the written law or without it; but most explicitly represents that the righteous and the wicked alike—all men without discrimination—are to be judged on this one momentous day of final judgment. I hardly need to say that the same doctrine underlies the form of statement which appears in several other passages (*e. g.*, 2 Cor. 5: 10): "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad." ——Very specific to our present point is the vision of the Revelator John as given chap. 20: 11–13: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;" . . . . . "and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God" [*all* the dead]; "and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." The reader can not fail to notice that the documents are here for judging both the righteous and the wicked. "Another book, which is the book of life," is the document for all the righteous; the books other than this are for the wicked. The judgment of both great classes is provided for and transpires in this one and the same august scene. We have already noticed the testimony given here to a universal resurrection, preparatory to this universal judgment. What ground remains for doubt as to the Bible doctrine of one general and final judgment for all of human kind?——But let it be further noted, these passages do not propose to define precisely the *duration* of this day of final judgment. How long or short soever, it is one great transaction, unique, peculiar, devoted to one grand, solemn purpose, and to no other. The judgment spoken of is the investigation before the Supreme Judge into the heart and life, the deeds and words, of every man who has ever lived on the earth, followed by the final award of eternal destiny according to deeds and character. Yet, Dr. Duffield asserts that there will be two judgment days, the first comprising two entirely distinct forms of judgment, viz., one, awarding to all the righteous, whether then living or previously dead, their final sentence, but not touching the wicked dead at all, and affecting the living wicked only by inflicting upon them such calamities as war, pestilence, earthquakes, *i. e.*, such judgments as God has been sending upon wicked nations ever since the world began. This strange doctrine finds not a hint for its support in the standard passages on this subject

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which appear in the divine word. Moreover, the second part of his scheme, viz., that the second judgment day omits the righteous altogether and concerns the wicked only, is utterly unknown to the Bible.

III. The third point lies fully within the domain of practical and most vital truth. It declares, negatively, that "the kingdom of heaven," as this phrase is used in the Scriptures, is *not* the reign of Christ in and during the gospel age; did *not* begin at or near the ascension of Christ; and has not begun yet. Affirmatively it holds that this "kingdom of heaven" will begin with Christ's second coming, and is precisely Christ's reign with his risen saints during the millennium——The reader will soon see that this is one of the most vital points of the subject. So Dr. Duffield's book regards it. On the first page of his preface he says: "The great question which forms the nucleus of the whole discussion is one and very simple, viz., Is the kingdom of heaven a *new dispensation*, to be introduced on earth by the visible, personal coming of Jesus Christ? Or has it been commenced, and is it now in the progress of its expansion through the influence of moral and political causes, and especially the preaching of the gospel; designed, in the providence of God, to overcome human corruption . . . . and to restore to the world the dominion of truth, peace, and righteousness, without any accession of miraculous agencies?" Undeniably he means by a "*new dispensation*"—new compared with the present—something unlike and other than the gospel age, and, moreover, including a vast "accession of miraculous agencies." Thus, again (p. 274), he says: "The New Testament dispensation is but *the gospel of the kingdom of heaven* TO COME"—that is, not yet come, but yet to come in that future day when Christ shall appear the second time. (See also Dr. Lord's Journal, I: 483, 485, and II: 659.)

On this great point the Scriptures are in direct issue, for they teach that "the kingdom of heaven" *is* the gospel reign of Christ; that it was fully inaugurated at his ascension to heaven, and has been in active operation ever since. The testimony of the Scriptures may be conveniently arranged under the following heads: (1.) The phrases, "Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of Heaven," are taken up in the New Testament from Daniel (2: 44, and 7: 14, etc.) upon which passages the reader will please examine my notes. Daniel's prophetic eye saw the succession of great empires ruling the world, down to the first coming of Christ, and then saw the dominion of the world given to him and to his saints forever. Jesus began his ministry by declaring that he came to fulfill that great vision, and that the time thereof was then at hand. Let this great fact be carefully noted. (2.) Jesus, brought before Pilate (John 18: 37), solemnly declared himself a king; his kingdom, however, being "not of this world"—*i. e.*, not precisely like the kingdoms that are of earth only, but an *empire of truth;* its power, the power of truth, and its aim, the sway of truth over all human hearts. (3.) John the Baptist, with special intent to

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prepare the way for Jesus, preached, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Repentance would change their moral attitude toward this King from rebellion to obedience; hence the pertinence of saying, Repent, for your King is coming; prepare ye the way of your coming Lord. This approaching King was Jesus, then soon to appear before the people, to reveal great truths concerning God and salvation, to call men to turn from their sins and find life and peace in his love and service. According to Paul (Acts 19: 4), "John said to the people that they should believe on him who should come after himself, that is, on Jesus." (4.) Jesus did appear soon, and forthwith began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4: 17). As if purposely to forestall the capital mistake of the premillennarians, and show that in saying "near at hand" he did *not* mean eighteen hundred years afterward, he is said, by Mark (1: 14, 15) to have declared, "*The time is fulfilled*, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand." [Shall we pause here to marvel at the strange perversion of Scripture which, in the face of such a declaration, can still assert that *the time is not fulfilled yet?*] (5.) To show yet more fully that this doctrine is vital in the gospel scheme, or, rather, that this phrase was in common use to express the essential idea of the gospel work, the grand purpose and object of Jesus in coming to our world, he made this the central point in his commission to his disciples: "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10: 7). "Say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10: 9). Jesus comes to reign over all hearts. He has pardons for the guilty, be they only penitent and self-humbled before him. Bow to his scepter and be ye saved! This was the grand announcement—the great proclamation of amnesty—the all-comprehensive summons to returning and renewed allegiance to the living God through his incarnate Son. (6.) Jesus illustrated this "kingdom of heaven" by various parables, which assume that this kingdom, considered as *coming, is precisely embodied in the gospel age and dispensation;* that it calls men to repentance; makes offers of mercy to the penitent; enforces these offers by both love and justice—love in the promise of pardon; justice in retribution upon the incorrigible. See Matt. 22: 2, and 20: 1, and 18: 23, and 13: 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, and Luke 14: 15–24. See also Luke 16: 16, which testifies that since John the Baptist came, "the kingdom of God is preached, and *every man presseth into it.*" Was not this kingdom the very gospel of salvation—a then present fact—a kingdom whose door of admission was even then already open? How could sinners be pressing into it *then*, if really it had not come, if its door was not then opened, and is not opened yet? (7.) Jesus declared that some then living should not die till they had "seen the kingdom of God come with power." (See Mark 9: 1, and Luke 9: 27.) And yet the premillennarians aver that this kingdom of God has not "come with power" yet! (8.) Just before his ascension, among his last words to his disciples, Jesus

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declared, "All power *is given* to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28: 18). What more could he have said to show that his kingdom was already come, and its dispensation already begun? What additional power could be subsequently given him to make him in any higher sense a king? If he was not then in possession of the "kingdom of heaven" (as the phrase is used in the Scriptures), how can he ever be? [His ascension to heaven and public inauguration there, are thought of in this declaration as accomplished facts, only a few moments, it may be, in the future.] ——Let no reader overlook the special object had in view in making this declaration: "Go ye, *therefore*"—*i. e.*, *because* I have now opened the kingdom of heaven; because the gospel reign of love and grace is now begun, go ye, *therefore*—"and disciple all the nations;" or, as Mark has it (16: 15), "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world." Fear nothing: all power in heaven and earth is mine.——Was it possible that those disciples could have understood him to mean that his kingdom of heaven would not open until his second coming, at least eighteen hundred years in the future? Is it credible that they could think of the "kingdom of heaven" as any thing other than the gospel age then opened? Did not they see that Jesus was already king in heaven and in earth—made so for the very purpose of calling men to himself under the offers of salvation, and, moreover, that he was made "Lord of all," that he might lack no powers, spiritual or temporal, over mind or over matter, which were needful to sustain his servants, controlling all events and agencies, human, angelic, or divine, for the absolute success of this vast enterprise?——But let us pass on to see how the apostles did in fact understand their Lord. (9.) After the ascension the apostles testify, pointedly and unqualifiedly, that God had already exalted the risen Jesus to become "Lord of all," a Prince as well as a Savior, raised high above all the principalities and powers of the heavenly hierarchy. Thus, in Peter's great pentecostal sermon (Acts 2: 36), the very gist and pith of it, or (to keep nearer the preacher's own figure) the barbed arrow that went to the hearts of three thousand men, was precisely this piercing truth: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ!" *The man ye have murdered has been made King of the* UNIVERSE! Bow to his scepter lest ye fall beneath his arm!——Not many days after, Peter preached the same doctrine, in slightly varying phrase, before the Sanhedrim, and with cutting effect: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And when they heard that, they were cut to the heart" (Acts 5: 30–33). Let no reader fail to notice that Jesus is made Prince and Savior, not merely or mainly to destroy his enemies with miraculous judgments, but to give them repentance and forgiveness of sins. In other words, he became a King

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in this now opened kingdom of heaven for the very purposes of gospel salvation, to do the great work of the gospel age—save the souls of guilty men. This is not the premillennarian doctrine, but it is the doctrine of the Apostles, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Bible.——It would seem that Peter did not know how to preach a gospel sermon without making this the grand and central idea.——But let us pass on to note his first sermon to a Gentile audience. Observe how this vital truth drops into its prominent place (Acts 10: 34–43): "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (*he is Lord of all*)," *i. e.*, supreme Lord, clothed with power than which none can be higher; and yet there is precious gospel in it, for this Jesus is the promised King of salvation ["peace"] to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, Lord of *all* alike.——The testimony of Peter may be closed here by citing his memorable words (1 Pet. 3: 22) concerning Jesus raised from the dead: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." Was he not, therefore, as truly the King and Lord of all then as he ever can be? Was not the kingdom of heaven, in the scriptural sense of the phrase, already opened and inaugurated then, all power being given to Christ in heaven and in earth for the ends of human salvation?——The logical mind of Paul grasps and states the purpose of this inauguration of Christ as King and Lord (Rom. 14: 8–10): "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" [*i. e.*, are bound to own him as our supreme Lord]; "for to this end Christ both died and rose and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." (See also Phil. 2: 5–11.) I refer to yet one other passage for the precious light it throws on certain points. For the Ephesian brethren (Eph. 1: 18–23), Paul prays that they may know the exceeding greatness of God's power in behalf of believers *according to* that which "he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the Church." The thoughtful reader will be struck with the exuberant fullness of the idea of Christ's exaltation to supreme dignity and power, and will also note with interest that he receives this exaltation and power that he may become head over all for the sake of his Church—his Church on this earth *in its present age*, precisely when they need his power in providence, his power in and through the truth, his power by the Divine Spirit—for the great work of human salvation, to save his people from their sin, and to bring the nations of men to become his people. Verily Paul is not waiting for a better gospel dispensation; he has no thought of asking the Church to hold over in the work of converting men to God till Jesus Christ shall have received more *power*, and so shall be able to provide more effective converting

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and sanctifying agencies, *i. e.*, till Christ shall have truly set up his kingdom of heaven!——The reader should not fail to notice that the Apostles not only preached a risen Jesus, exalted to the throne of the universe, and his reign, therefore, truly begun—his New Testament kingdom of heaven already come—but they make this great fact preëminently prominent. In their preaching it is not only a gospel truth, but a most vital and fundamental one.—— It need scarcely be said here that the millennial age is simply this gospel reign of Jesus in its perfected state of development on this earth under its present régime. This is the view given of it by all the prophets. It is both introduced and produced by the preaching of the gospel and the consequent diffusion of gospel truth—the Messiah becoming thus "a light to the Gentiles," and his gospel the power of God unto salvation to the ends of the earth. His people are his servants in this ministry of truth to the nations. The Divine Spirit attending is evermore the energizing power upon the hearts of men.

The several points next in order [4–8] are so closely related to each other, that the premillennarian views of them may best be presented by grouping them together.

IV–VIII. According to our premillennarian authors the present is a *waiting*, not a *working* age; Christ's personal bodily presence will bring both surpassing spiritual power and supreme joy to Zion; his people should therefore hold their hearts in longing, waiting attitude for his second coming; should expect no great results from their spiritual labors under the present régime, but wait for agencies a thousand-fold more effective; for the world can not be converted under the present dispensation, but will be most readily and rapidly under the next, etc.

These doctrines underlie the ideas of Christian duty and the expressions of Christian faith and hope which appear throughout these premillennial writings. Dr. Duffield says: "We wait with ardent expectation for the wondrous scenes of Christ's second coming" (page 365). But "one-half at least of professing Christians being profoundly asleep and totally unprepared, will never awake to the sense of *their duty to look and watch for his coming* till the wonderful scenes of the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, and the rapture of the living saints, shall overwhelm them with horror and dismay" (page 366).——The leading points in the premillennial system Dr. Duffield presents thus (p. 161–167): "They regard the millennium, *not* as the expansion and universal diffusion of the gospel in a season of unprecedented religious prosperity—*not* as the consummation of the present evangelical dispensation; but as a *new dispensation*, to be miraculously introduced and to possess its own distinct and peculiar attributes. The gospel dispensation which commenced with the ministry of Christ, and was fully introduced on the day of Pentecost, they believe (as Christ and the Apostles styled it) is the dispensation of the *good news of the kingdom of heaven drawing nigh;* but the millennium, the kingdom itself, commenced" [*i. e.*, is to commence] "with the awful

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retributions of divine justice on the enemies of Christ; the one the proclamation or heralding of the kingdom *coming;* and the other, the kingdom *come*, introduced by terrible displays of divine vengeance." "This kingdom" [Dr. Duffield affirms] "is *not* the Church of God as she now exists in her visible organization, and in which Christians are *the subjects*, yielding obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ; but it is a new and glorious development of almighty power, grace and justice, in which the saints of all past ages shall return with Christ to the earth to receive their raised bodies, and shall be employed by Christ as *his kings and priests*, his subordinate agents and officers to administer under him the government then to be established over the nations that yet remain in the flesh. The saints in the millennial state are to "*reign with* Christ," to be the "*rulers and not the ruled.*"——Also at Christ's second coming, "he will reëstablish the theocracy in Jerusalem in more than its pristine glory, with its temple rebuilt and rites of worship adapted to the dispensation in which Jerusalem and the Jewish nation are to stand preëminent among the nations; that the risen and glorified saints will be his kings and priests for the administration of the political and religious interests of the nation; that the theocracy, with its temple rebuilt, as described by Ezekiel, and established in Jerusalem, shall be the nucleus and center of all political and religious influence, and all the nations of the earth be united to it; that while Christ will indeed dwell on the earth, his presence will be displayed but occasionally at Jerusalem as King, according to rites and at seasons appointed by himself; that his constant and immediate presence will be in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, not built by the hands of men but directly and miraculously by God, in which there shall be no temple, but Christ's presence constitute its glory and the delight of his risen saints; and that while heaven shall thus descend on earth, the saints will have communication with the nations in the flesh, and the theocracy be made the channel of heavenly influences for the happiness of the world; and that after retributive judgments shall have exterminated the wicked on the face of the whole Roman earth, there shall be found remnants of people on whom the abundant and mighty influences of the Spirit shall be poured out, and nations be born in a day by their conversion and cordial submission to the dominion of heaven by the means of the saints." So the surviving populations of the world are to be converted. Thus Dr. Duffield.——Dr. Lord seems to hold the same general system, and is particularly explicit as to the genius and purpose of the millennial dispensation. Thus he maintains that "no future events are more clearly revealed than these—that Christ is, within a brief period, to come from heaven in person visibly; raise the sanctified who shall have died; judge and accept those who are living; destroy the civil and ecclesiastical powers which usurp his rights and persecute his people; and, renewing the nations that survive, reign over them with his glorified saints through a long round of ages" (Journal, vol. 1: 485).——Again, he denies

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that "Christ's reign on the earth is to be merely spiritual, not literal;" denies that "the nations are to be converted merely by the means now in the hands of the Church, accompanied by larger influences of the Spirit;" denies that "the millennium is to occur under the present dispensation;" denies that "there is to be only one resurrection and one judgment—these to occur at the close of the thousand years;" denies that "the multiplication of the race and the work of redemption are then to reach their end, the earth to be destroyed, and the redeemed transferred to another scene of existence." These views he declares are "in direct contravention of the clear and emphatic representations of the Scriptures."—— On the other hand, he affirms that "the prophecies expressly teach that Christ is to reign on the earth" [*i. e.*, not spiritually, but literally and personally]; that "other and far more effective means are then to be employed to teach, impress, and rule the race;" that "Christ's advent is to precede that reign;" that "there are to be two resurrections and two judgments, one of each before and one after the millennium; and that the earth, instead of being destroyed at the last judgment, is to subsist forever and be occupied by the race under his sway." [Vol. 2: 658, 659.]——Moreover, Dr. Lord most earnestly and with pages of attempted argument, denies that "the present is peculiarly the dispensation of the Spirit" [2: 661–665]; denies also that "the nations are to be converted and the millennium introduced by the labors of Christians according to the present gospel system," saying, "Christ's people will not be introdueed into the millennium by their own ordinary" [*i. e.*, non-miraculous] "agency;" also affirming "that those generally who are engaged in the conduct and support of missions and other agencies for the conversion of men *are acting on mistaken notions both of God's purposes and of their instrumentality, and will be disappointed.* They are proceeding on the persuasion that the world is to be christianized and sanctified through the means which they are now employing, and without any extraordinary divine interposition" [*i. e.*, of miraculous power]. In his view God has predicted that "the apostate powers denoted by the wild beast and the false prophet are to continue till Christ comes; are then to be destroyed by his avenging hand, not won to obedience by the persuasions of men. And God will not contradict these predictions and verify the wishes and hopes of those who misjudge his word and assume to themselves the work which he alone can achieve, but will allow them to accomplish their own refutation." [Journal, 1: 486, 487]. "These errors of the Church are not slight or uninfluential, but most serious, affecting essentially the conceptions that are formed of the divine government and of duty. It is not a mere error of theory, but, at least in many instances, of the *heart* also, for it is associated with an indifference to the divine purposes, an unbelief, a prejudice and an alienation that are seen only in connection with false views. It is an indubitable and terrible mark of its character that it is to continue to be held by apostates, and will be among their distinguishing traits at the last

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hour" [Journal 1: 485, 486]. [That is, those who are working most zealously for the conversion of the world to-day are to be classed with the scoffers, who say "Where is the promise of his coming?"]——Dr. Lord also maintains strenuously that Christ's second coming will introduce far more effective agencies for the conversion of men than those of the present Christian age. Thus: "It is expressly revealed that Christ is then to assume the sway of the earth in a new relation, and exert a variety of acts that must work a vast revolution in the ideas of men, and be a thousand-fold more effective than any other means that are now employed to enlighten, convert, and impress them" [Journal 2: 667]. "Then there will be a new and extraordinary system of means for the instruction, impression, and sway of the race, immeasurably more august and effective than those which are now used, constituting a far greater change in the administration of the world than took place at the introduction of Christianity, and rendering it in a far higher sense a new and peculiar dispensation" [Journal 2: 668, 673, 674, 676].

In reply to these premillennial dogmas, the three following positions, being fundamental, should be somewhat fully sustained by scriptural authority, viz., that *the present age is precisely the dispensation of the Spirit; that Jesus set his apostles to the work of converting the world as a thing to be done, and for which adequate means and forces were provided; and that they found confirmation of their mission, and the inspiration of assured success, in the prophecies of the Old Testament, which gave them both the genius and nature of the Christian dispensation and magnificent views of its results.*

1. *The present age is peculiarly and precisely the dispensation of the Spirit.*——There is no occasion to say that the Spirit was not in the world before the day of Pentecost. I only maintain that he was preëminently manifested then and onward during this age of the world. So the Old Testament prophecies had foreshown, *e. g.*, Joel 2: 28, 29, with Acts 2: 14–21; Ezek. 36: 25–27, and 39: 29, and Isa. 44: 3–5, and 48: 16, and 59: 19–21, and Jer. 31: 31–34, with Heb. 8: 8–12. [The reader is referred to my notes on these several passages.]——So Jesus taught his disciples. Note especially how John interpreted and applied those memorable words of Jesus on that "great day of the feast:" "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me (as the Scripture hath said), out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Upon these words the comment of John is: "But this spake he of the *Spirit*, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." After Jesus had been glorified by being raised from the dead and exalted at God's right hand in the heavens, he did indeed send down the Holy Ghost in glorious power.——In the course of his conversations with his disciples on that memorable night of his arrest (John 14–16), he spake more fully than ever before of the work which the Spirit would do, and

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renewed his promise to send him as *another* Comforter than himself, and an abiding Teacher. (See John 14: 15–17, 26, and 15: 26, and 16: 7–15.) These promises were repeated in substance immediately before his ascension. (Luke 24: 49, and Acts 1: 4, 5, 8.) With the day of Pentecost these great promises began to be signally fulfilled. That day fully opened the gospel age. The book which we have been wont to call "The Acts of the Apostles," is throughout one glorious testimony to the fulfillment of this great promise of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the book might more correctly have been styled "*The Acts of the Holy Ghost*," or "The Acts of Apostolic men when filled with the Holy Ghost." The epistles also honor and recognize the present agency of the Divine Spirit as evermore the effective power by which sinners are regenerated and saints sanctified. It is marvelous that, with our Bible in their hand, men of average intelligence should fail to see this first truth of revelation: *The Divine agency of the Spirit of God promised and given as the special characteristic of the New Testament age, to make the Gospel effective to the salvation of men.*

2. It would seem too plain to be denied or to need proof that Jesus sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel to all the world, with the full understanding that, *as he had given them their message of truth to preach, so had he also promised them all the Divine power requisite to their complete success.* Equally clear is it that they embarked in this enterprise as a *thing to be done.* It was *while* they were "filled with the Spirit," and because they were thus filled, that they took this view of their responsibilities, of their duties, and of the Divine help promised them, and threw their heart and life into this grand mission. Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"—Jew or Gentile—all the world (Rom. 1: 16). He speaks (Eph. 1: 19) of the "*exceeding greatness of his power* toward us who believe," comparing it to that working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. In all the preaching and all the writings of the apostles, there is not the first hint that they felt oppressed (as the modern premillennarian writers seem to) with a sense of inadequacy and ineffectiveness in gospel truth and in the Holy Ghost as agencies and powers for the conversion of men—not a hint that they were looking away into the remote future for another dispensation "of a thousand-fold greater effectiveness for saving men." You may read hour after hour of Paul's preaching at Antioch, and Ephesus, and Berea, and Thessalonica, and Corinth; you may read the letters he wrote to these and other churches, and not detect the first word of despair or even doubt as to any considerable success in preaching the gospel Christ had taught him, to be wrought by the Spirit Christ had given. Every reader will be struck with the contrast between *his* labors, his expectations, and his spirit on the one hand, and the tone and reasonings of these premillennial authors on the other.

3. *The apostles found in the ancient prophets an ample warrant*

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for giving the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13: 46, 47, and 15: 14–18, and Rom. 11: 25–27, and 15: 8–12, 21). Those prophecies served both to interpret and to confirm their great commission: "Go ye into all the world" (Mark. 16: 15); "Go and teach all nations" (Matt. 28: 19). Those prophecies manifestly assured the apostles that far more than a mere fragment—more than an insignificant portion of the race—would ultimately be brought to Christ. Paul witnesseth that "the fullness" (the mass) "of the Gentiles will come in," and also that then "*all* Israel shall be saved," it having been written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. 11: 25–27, and Isa. 59: 20, and Jer. 31: 31–34). To evade this argument by asserting that these events lie beyond the resurrection, is bold assumption, of which no hint whatever appears in Paul. On the contrary, Paul deems himself held by the high behest of his Lord to essentially the same work which prophecy had assigned to Jesus the Messiah—in both cases the very work of the gospel age. Was it said to Paul, "To the Gentiles I now send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?" (Acts 26: 17, 18.) The same work had long before been assigned to the Messiah and to his servants: "I will give thee for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes," etc. (Isa. 42: 6, 7, and 49: 6, and 35: 5, and 61: 1–3). The apostles were not left in uncertainty as to the work they were to do, or the agencies they had to use and rely upon, or as to the purpose of God respecting the actual, ultimate success of this work under such agencies and forces. Their work was to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16: 15); their agencies and powers were in part this very gospel truth, adapted to teach and melt human hearts, yet not to be left to its own inherent power, but to be *made mighty through the Spirit of God;* for the promise was, "And they shall be all taught of God." Under the new covenant (the gospel age) the Lord promised, "I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest" (Heb. 8: 10, 11). And lest this great promise should be perversely wrested from this present Christian age and put over into the future state, the writer to the Hebrews most plainly shows that the old covenant (the Mosaic system) was even then just "ready to vanish away," to give place to this new covenant in its stead.——Moreover, the results of this new covenant [the gospel age with its teaching Spirit] were abundantly indicated by the ancient prophets, especially by Isaiah, who saw the nations of the wide world coming up to Zion to learn God's law (Isa. 2: 2–4, and 42: 1, 3, 4, and 49: 6–12, 18–23, and 60: etc.); saw also that men should "no more hurt or destroy, because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"

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(11: 9); saw that the Messiah, endowed with the Spirit of God, should "bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;" should "not fail nor be discouraged till he had established judgment" [true piety] "in the earth;" and "the isles should wait for his law" (42: 1–8). [See my notes on this and kindred passages.] Remarkably, some of the richest predictions of success under the present gospel system either assert or assume the efficiency of the working forces of this system. Thus Isa. 55 closes with paradise restored like the primitive Eden: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, and this shall be to the Lord for a name"—*i. e.*, to his immortal honor. This prophecy gives the effective agencies that produce these results, thus: "As the rain coming down from heaven and returning not" without leaving a blessing; "so shall my word" [of gospel truth] "be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return void," *i. e.*, fruitless of blessings; "but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye" [who preach my word] "shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace" [prosperity]; all nature shall give tokens of her sympathetic joy over such blessed results; "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."——While this passage makes the gospel word prominent, and affirms its sure efficiency, other passages (*e. g.*, Isa. 59: 19–21, and 61: 1, and Ezek. 36: —) give special honor to the Divine Spirit. See the passage (Isa. 59: 19–21) with my notes upon it. The myriads of men from the mighty West and from the distant East shall fear the name of the Lord when his cause and truth shall move on like a mighty river within straitened banks, on which the Spirit of the Lord lifts up his victorious banner; for God's covenant is, "My Spirit that is upon thee [my own Zion], and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed . . . . from henceforth and forever." If now the reader would see the results of gospel truth in our world when made mighty by the Spirit of God in the hearts of his people under this covenant, let him read what Isaiah saw and said in this immediate connection (chap. 60), and then ask himself if this is not glorious victory! Let him ask if this does not mean triumphant success to the gospel, going forth in the majesty of truth from the mouth of God, and made effective by the Spirit of the Lord abiding with his people. And then let him pass on to the next chapter (61), and note how this Spirit rests first upon the meek and gentle Messiah, who goes forth to bind up the heart-broken; to give men liberty from the bondage of Satan and sin; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and to comfort spiritual mourners. Let no one fail to notice also that Jesus, in Capernaum, as if to forestall every endeavor to wrest this promise away from the gospel age and shift it over into some future dispensation (after the day of judgment), anchors it fast to our own gospel times by solemnly declaring, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your

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ears" (Luke 4: 18–22).——This list of prophecies which foreshow the grand but simple agencies that do the work of the gospel age, and which assume or affirm their full and triumphant success, might be almost indefinitely extended. But why should it be needful?——Yet let the reader carefully note that these Old Testament prophecies not only give no hint that their fulfillment lies beyond the second advent, beyond the resurrection, in another and far different dispensation, but they preclude the legitimate possibility of such an application. For they commence with the scenes of Christ's first advent; they give us then the great facts of the Christian age—the genius, the objects, the work of this age—the conversion of the Gentiles; the mission and work of the Holy Ghost; and then they tell us (*e. g.*, Isa. 42: 1–6) that the Messiah will press this work forward, neither rashly impetuous, nor timidly weak-hearted, till he shall have enlightened the nations and established true piety and righteousness in all the earth. There is no place for the resurrection from the dead and the final judgment till this work is done. No hint appears of a new system of agencies and powers, unknown to the gospel age. There is not a word breathing the tone of the premillennial writings to the effect that these gospel agencies are inefficient; never have done much; never can be expected to reach the masses; and were never intended of God for such results. Not a tinge of such sentiment appears in Isaiah; not a shade of it in any of the Old Testament prophets.

Having expanded these three main points sufficiently (it is hoped) for the candid reader, I proceed to group together briefly, and with some recapitulation, the points I make in opposition to the premillennarian views now under discussion.——1. Christ's *first* advent (not his second) provided the means and prepared the way by his teachings, his life, and his death, for the conversion of the world.——2. All the truth necessary for this end—truth adapted to man's moral nature—was taught by Jesus; was also developed and illustrated in his life and in his death, leaving nothing more or better to be desired.——3. The spiritual power requisite to make this gospel truth effective to the salvation of sinners was amply provided in the mission of the Holy Ghost—a mission which, in both promise and fact, belongs to the whole Christian age.——4. Jesus not only permitted and authorized, but *commanded* his disciples, then and onward, to bear this gospel to every creature until the world should be converted, and put them to this work *as a thing to be done*, for which he had made all the provisions needful. They so understood his commands, and did, in fact, give their lives to this grand enterprise.——5. They found in Old Testament prophecy confirmation for this view of their work, learning there that Christ sent them with their gospel-light to the Gentiles, and actually embraced in his plan the conversion of the world to God.——6. The prophecies do, in fact, give both the nature and the results of the gospel age—as to its *nature*, revealing the first advent of the Messiah, the great facts of his gospel

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history and his vicarious sacrifice in his death; the coördinate labors of his people and the mission of his Spirit, working in them, with and through them; and its results in these special points; the enlightening of the Gentiles, the triumph of his truth, the enlargement of his Zion to embrace the world.——7. Remarkably the Scriptures distinctly recognize the intrinsic weakness of the human instruments for this stupendous work; but so far from fearing or intimating its ultimate failure on this ground, they seem to infer rather its more glorious success inasmuch as human weakness affords the larger scope for divine strength: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 4: 7); "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12: 10).——This is quite unlike the improvement proposed by the premillennial authors before us, viz., to put this work for the greater efficiency into the hands of the risen saints in their glorified bodies, forever divested of all physical frailty, and clothed with immortality.——8. The present age of our world is not merely *a* day, but *the* day and the *only* day of possible mercy and salvation, not one ray of hope appearing anywhere in the Scriptures for the repentance of sinners in any state after this, and all the calls and promises, and the whole mission of the Spirit, being, at least by implication, limited to this life and to the present age of the world, since after death comes the judgment (Heb. 9: 27) and its everlasting issues of retribution (Matt. 25: 46).

The last point in the series of premillennial antagonisms to the Bible (No. 9), viz., that Judaism, with only very slight changes, is to be reëstablished in Jerusalem according to the literal construction of Ezek. 40–48 chapters, I must dismiss by referring the reader to my extended discussion of that point in my notes on the passage.

POINTS THAT ARE UTTERLY IMPROBABLE.

There are various things in this premillennial system which may be profitably looked at in the light of their intrinsic and intense improbability.——Thus, that when Christ said: "The kingdom of heaven is *at hand*," he actually meant that it was more than eighteen hundred years in the future, is very improbable. ——That John the Baptist, preparing the way for Jesus, should make it the burden of his message to proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is *at hand*," and yet mean by this only his *second* coming, and not his first, is amazingly improbable.——That for any or even all purposes of Christian life, labor, or joy, it is better for Christians, while in their mortal flesh, to have Christ's bodily presence than to have his presence revealed spiritually by the Blessed Comforter, is far more than merely improbable, especially because we have Christ's own solemn affirmation (John 16: 7) to the contrary!——That in the millennial state there will be such a mixed population as the authors before us affirm, some whole nations in the flesh and in their sins; then some of them converted,

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yet still remaining in the flesh, while there will also be myriads of saints risen from the dead and in their immortal bodies, living on this same earth at the same time, and all associating together —is much more like a fancy than a fact—is vastly improbable. ——That the immortal saints are to have unprecedented success in preaching the gospel to the wicked nations in the flesh, because they "have this treasure, not in earthly vessels but in heavenly," is entirely in contrast with God's plan under the present dispensation, and is therefore violently improbable.——That, in the millennial age, the risen saints are to be "*rulers*" in such a sense that they are "not *ruled*" even by Jesus Christ, is unendurably revolting to the Christian heart, and is far more than improbable; it is and ought to be forever impossible.

THAT THE SYSTEM CAN NOT BE TRUE.

There are certain points of view in which it becomes most apparent that this premillennial system *can not be true.*——Thus, if Christ and his apostles had distinctly taught this doctrine, it must inevitably have emasculated the working forces of Christianity; must have quenched their hopes of any considerable success; must have put the Church upon *waiting* rather than upon *working* for at least nearly two thousand years! must have made such missionary labors as those of the apostles and primitive Christians an impossibility! Therefore it can not be that they taught this system; therefore it can not be true.——That Paul understood the gospel system to hold him by the authority of his risen Lord to a life of waiting and not of working, *can not be true.* His whole Christian life proves it impossible. That he could have written or could have believed respecting the work of gospel missions what Dr. Lord has written and seems to have believed, is purely absurd—at war with every element of his fervent, untiring missionary life.——That Jesus should frown upon those of his servants who give their money, their prayers, their earthly comforts, and even their very life to the work of "preaching the gospel to every creature," *can not be true!* And the system which culminates ultimately in sentiments so abhorrent to both piety and reason *can not be true!*——A system that breaks down the confidence of God's people in the working spiritual forces of this Christian age [mainly gospel truth made effective by the Holy Ghost], and which therefore bears with its whole power against faith in God for success in gospel labors, is squarely opposed to the spirit of the apostles and of the primitive church—is fearfully adverse to the grand mission which Jesus indicates to his people in our times by both his providences and his Spirit, and therefore can not be true. Against this system, because legitimately fraught with such results, I must bear my earnest protest. It goes utterly against all the convictions of my moral nature. It is a comfort and a joy to me to know that the Bible bears no responsibility for such a system, has no sympathy with it, and can be suborned to sustain it only by a strange ignoring or misconstruction of its

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language. That error must be a sad and fearful one which naturally strikes down the hope and the faith of God's people; palsies the hand of labor, chills the heart of prayer, robs the glorious missionary work of our times of all sustaining assurance of success, and of all the energy which God meant to have this assurance beget and sustain.

GREAT POINTS OF VITAL TRUTH IGNORED.

These premillennial authors seem to me to have utterly failed to apprehend some of the most vital truths.——*E. g.*, They fail to apprehend the inherent adaptation of the great truths of the gospel to the human mind and their consequent power upon the heart and the life when seen in their simplicity and taught impressively by the Holy Ghost.——They strangely fail to discern the relative superiority of manifested love compared with terror and fear as a power for subduing human hearts to penitence, since they perpetually assume that the outburst of terrific judgments at Christ's second coming will be mightier than the tears and blood of Jesus to bring sinners to godly sorrow for their sins.——They most remarkably fail to appreciate and honor the spiritual work of the Holy Ghost in the gospel age. Consequently they write and reason as if they ignored the very idea of Christ's presence revealed to the Christian heart by the Comforter (John 14: 16–18, and 16: 13–15), and as if they had no just conception of the power of the Holy Ghost in presenting truth before the sinner's mind and pressing it upon his conscience and his heart.——They fail to understand the spirit and the work of the apostles when filled with the Holy Ghost. Consequently they fail to see the genius and aim of the Christian dispensation.

To the influence of these very defective views of many vital truths must we ascribe the fact that these premillennial authors so readily acquiesce in the assumed failure of truth and of her great King on the world's moral battle-field during the present age. All must admit that such a conflict is now going on, of truth against error, holiness against sin, Christ against Satan. The marvel is that these authors staunchly maintain that, in this conflict—not thus far only, but down to Christ's second coming, truth and holiness will make but feeble fight; error and sin are sure to conquer. This they hold is the inevitable issue of the struggle as waged under the present order of things. But in the next dispensation, Jesus Christ will bring in the new forces of his awful judgments; and with their aid he will conquer. On the battle-field of fire and thunder and earthquake, and awful convulsions of great Nature's frame, he will come off victorious! That which love and tears, truth and reason, and the Holy Ghost, have failed to achieve, the awful terrors of Christ's second coming and the vials of his consuming wrath upon the guilty nations of the whole Roman earth, will accomplish.——Against this doctrine that the gospel and the cross and the Holy Ghost must and will to the end of time fail of moral, spiritual victory on this great battle-field of

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human hearts, I most earnestly protest. The gospel and the cross are never to be thus humiliated; the Holy Ghost will not be thus dishonored! The very thought is abhorrent to every Christian feeling. If this should be the ultimate result, the holy angels would cover their faces in grief and shame, and all hell would shout in a chorus of triumph.——Delay of victory need give us no solicitude, for the forces of truth may be silently but surely gathering strength; but to fail of victory altogether—to be forced to change the essential elements of man's state of probation, and change also the weapons of the conflict so as to put physical agencies fully into the foreground—this is deplorably humiliating, especially after the confident and most sublime predictions of victory which the old prophets made and sung with such thrilling rapture!

And what shall we say of the scheme for *another system of probation*, to come in after one resurrection and one final judgment—a system very unlike the present, worked by new moral forces, with a kind of gospel preachers unknown either to our present world or to our present Bible, and the whole operated amid new surroundings? By what license is this new moral probation for sinners assumed and affirmed? How do these premillennial authors *know* the things which they teach on this point? If men may assume one additional probation, unique, peculiar, supplemental to the present, and (as they claim) far more effective than this, why not assume also another and yet another, on and on indefinitely? Why not enlarge the plan so as to include all the wicked dead? How much will it be safe and wise to add in this way to the things written in the book of God?——The reader may remember that Dives proposed essentially this system, precisely this sort of gospel preachers (Luke 16: 30, 31), but Jesus declined the proposal.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

Some will consider this essay incomplete without a respectful notice of the main arguments adduced by the authors before us in support of their system. They will expect this the more because these authors have made great account of their respective discussions of the principles of prophetic interpretation which they claim to have elaborated fully and settled on immovable foundations. ——The necessary limits of this essay forbid an extended review of those discussions. It must suffice to say, in a word, that their capital defect lies in overlooking the fact that the writers of the sacred Scriptures, both the Old and the New, were *Jews*, and were for many reasons almost entirely isolated from all other literature but their own. Consequently their language, their poetic conceptions, their symbolic imagery, are to be interpreted, not by the standard of modern literature, nor even of ancient classic literature, but by the literature of their own nation. Hebrew history, Hebrew poetry, Hebrew civil and religious institutions, must supply chiefly the material for determining the sense of the Hebrew prophets, whether of the Old Testament or of the New.

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These authors base their system very largely upon their construction of the prophecies of Daniel. These prophecies they have in my view egregiously misinterpreted. For the proof of this statement I must be allowed to refer to their writings and to my interpretation of that book.

Appeal is somewhat frequently made to the words of Christ (Matt. 24: 14) as showing that the work of the Christian age is already done, and therefore its end is now very near: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all the nations; and then shall the end come." It is claimed that these words refer to Christ's second coming and to the end of the world in its present form; and also that the gospel has been already preached *as a witness* to all the nations; therefore, the second coming of Christ is near at hand.

To this I reply—(1.) A preliminary question should first be settled, viz., whether the words refer to the end of the world, or rather to the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state. The chapter treats of both events; of the fall of Jerusalem and its temple primarily, and for the most part in the former portion of the chapter; of the end of the world and of the final judgment in a secondary way as great facts of an analogous character, of which the former were naturally the type and illustration. The context of this verse favors its reference to the fall of Jerusalem. If so, it should not be assumed to apply to the end of the world without some substantial reason. Yet I say this for the truth's sake only, and not at all because I need it for the point I have in hand. I have no fear of its reference to Christ's second coming, be it only shown to be legitimate.——For (2,) "The gospel of the kingdom, *preached for a witness to all nations*," implies certainly that its testimony is justly apprehended and fairly understood by the masses of mankind. To reach the true meaning of the phrase, "Preached as a witness," we need to consider that the gospel comes to us as *testimony* from God to men, certifying, witnessing certain great facts which reveal his matchless love for sinners of our race. Hence, when Jesus sent forth his apostles to "preach the gospel to every creature," he said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1: 8). And Jesus himself said before Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should *bear witness* unto the truth" (John 18: 37). This language of Jesus, therefore, "preached as a witness," is fraught with rich and precious meaning. As to the people to whom the gospel is thus preached, it means far more than a merely casual hearing of the name of Jesus; more than getting a loose, floating sense of something new, such as might be the case with millions who yet might have no adequate conception of what the gospel is. Men who have had a point to carry have toned down the significance of these words till almost nothing is left, and they can easily make out that already, in our own age, "the gospel has been preached as a witness to all the nations." Yet, how can this be reasonably assumed? How can it be sup-

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posed that the millions of human beings in China, in Japan, in northern as well as central and southern Asia, and in the great central regions of Africa have had "the gospel preached to them as a witness?" This language can not fitly be used of one-tenth part, even if it can of the twentieth part of the six hundred millions whom we have numbered as the heathen of our world.—— Taking this passage, then, as a prophetic statement of what must transpire in this world before the end shall come, we have a vast amount of gospel labor yet to be done. And this view of the case accords remarkably with the whole tenor of Old Testament prophecy. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations; it must go as a witness to God's matchless love, and must become intelligently known as such a witness before the end can come.

These premillennial authors rely much on two other passages in the New Testament (Acts 3: 19–21, and 2 Thess. 2: 1–8), claiming that they preclude the possibility of locating the conversion of the nations prior to the second advent of Christ. The former of these gives the words of Peter: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Upon this passage I remark: (1.) "Restitution" is one of the pivot words of the passage. It is generally conceded by the best critics to mean, the bringing about again of a state of things existing at some previous time; restoring to some former state. This noun comes from the verb which the disciples used (Acts 1: 6) in the question, "Wilt thou at this time *restore again* the kingdom to Israel?" The former state which Peter thinks of as by prophetic promise to come round again, may be either the prosperous reign of David over Israel, considered as the Jewish type of the Messiah's kingdom, or the paradisaical state of Eden. Both conceptions appear in the ancient prophets as symbols of the state to be induced upon the earth under the Messiah's reign. (2.) Whatever the precise sense of the word "restitution" may be, it manifestly refers to the great, central, prominent events foretold in Old Testament prophecy— "all the things which God hath spoken by the mouth of *all the prophets*." Now, the point at issue in this discussion with my premillennarian brethren (upon this passage) is simply this: Is heaven to receive [and retain] Jesus till this restitution *shall begin*, or till it *shall have ended*? Is Christ to come before those prophecies *begin* to be accomplished, or after their accomplishment shall be complete? The premillennarians assume the former alternative; I maintain the latter. In support of my view, I claim that the one comprehensive theme of those prophecies is the *work of the gospel age*. Some of this has been long since done; more of it is now going on; all of it pertains, by its very nature, to this age of the world, and therefore necessarily precedes the second

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coming of Christ. With most concurrent voice those prophecies foretell the calling and conversion of the Gentiles—long since begun; the enlargement of Zion and the diffusion of gospel light among the nations—both now in progress; and the consequent joy and peace of those who embrace the gospel. These events constitute the staple of those prophecies, things "spoken by *all* the holy prophets since the world began," and beyond all question they have been already a long time in progress, yet Christ's second advent is still in the future. Therefore it can not possibly precede the commencement of this "restitution;" and hence must either break in during the unfinished progress of these events, or occur at their close. The breaking in during their progress is inadmissible, for it is not the natural sense of the language, and is claimed by none; its location at the close of their fulfillment remains, therefore, the only legitimate construction of the passage.

The second passage is from Paul (2 Thess. 2: 1–8). Some of the Thessalonian brethren were unpleasantly affected by the apprehension that Christ's personal coming was then near at hand. To correct this misapprehension, Paul wrote to them thus: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."——The meaning of this (as held by the ablest commentators) is that two great events must precede Christ's coming: a "falling away," *i. e.*, a somewhat general apostasy; and the appearing of "the man of sin"—some extraordinary Antichrist. Paul describes this "man of sin" somewhat minutely; implies that the elements of evil were already at work which would some day culminate in bringing up this embodiment of intense wickedness, but they knew what now retarded his manifestation. When he should have reached the climax of his manifestation, the Lord would "destroy him with the brightness of his coming." These are the staple points of this passage.——The premillennarians affirm that "the man of sin" is the Papal power; that this power will stand, therefore, until Christ shall come in the majesty and terror of his second advent to destroy it, and therefore there can possibly be no place for the conversion of the world prior to this second advent.

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I reply: (1.) It has never been proved, and never can be, that "the man of sin" is definitely and precisely the Papal power. It can by no means be shown that the Papal power was then in existence, and already working, when Paul wrote; it can not be shown that the description here drawn applies to the Papal power so accurately in all its points as to preclude any other application and necessitate this; it can not be shown that some withholding, counteracting agency was then manifest and known to the Thessalonian brethren; nor can it be shown that a wicked man, a "son of perdition," corresponding to Judas, of whom these very words are said (John 17: 12)—a personage most distinctly described as a single individual (actual or ideal), is, in fact, a great ecclesiastical hierarchy or polity, a corrupt church. (2.) It will be exceedingly difficult to show that the Thessalonians could possibly understand Paul to refer to a church which should come up upon the page of history six hundred years after that time, or to the succession of its head men—not to any one man, but to many scores of men, coming into power one after another during a dozen centuries. (3.) I see no valid reason for assuming that the "falling away" [apostasy] was to be the prominent fact of the world's then future history, continuously and without interruption from that day down to Christ's second coming. Paul does not affirm this: by what logic can it be proved that he assumes it? Does he attempt in these eight verses to give an epitome of the religious history of the world during the entire Christian age to the very end thereof? (4.) The main purpose in this passage is obvious, viz., to assure the Thessalonian brethren that Christ's second coming was still remote, and was *not*, in the sense they had supposed, near at hand. But why Paul adduces precisely these intervening events to prove this rather than any other, who can tell? Why he alludes to the working of the elements of sin rather than to the operations of truth and of grace, as requiring time for their development, who knows? I see no reason for the opinion that he purposely omits any allusion to the preaching and the spread of the gospel because he tacitly assumes that nothing of any importance in this line was to occur during the gospel age. In a prophecy so brief as this, in which so little is said and so much left unsaid, it is sheer folly to assume that things omitted are left out because they do not in fact belong here, or because they are of inconsiderable importance compared with the points that are introduced. Such inferences are simply chimerical, unfounded.—— Holding ourselves to what is in fact said, we shall see that Paul apprises them that there is to be yet more antagonism of sin against holiness, substantially of such sort as they had seen already, and that, at some future time, how far distant he does not say, this antagonism would assume a surpassingly bold, defiant form, and would be most signally overwhelmed amid the brightness of Christ's second coming. More than this as to the date of this coming, or the intervening events of the world's history, he saith not. Why should we essay to put into his mouth what he

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never said? (5.) The only allusion elsewhere in prophecy to an apostasy, at once sudden, signal, eventful, astounding, but quenched with appalling majesty and terror in the awful brightness of Christ's second coming, is that given by John (Rev. 20: 7–10). In this prophecy the agency of Satan is made specially prominent. The "man of sin" may be considered as his special embodiment and incarnation. But the reader will observe that this last terrific development of superlative wickedness follows, not precedes, the millennium, and therefore leaves ample scope before its occurrence for the triumphs of the gospel over all the earth.



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